

HEGEL'S  
*PHENOMENOLOGY  
OF SPIRIT*

A CRITICAL RETHINKING  
IN SEVENTEEN LECTURES

RICHARD  
DIEN WINFIELD



# Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*



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Seventeen Lectures*

Richard Dien Winfield

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For Robert Bruce Berman





# Contents

Preface	ix
Lecture 1: Introduction	1
Lecture 2: Sense-Certainty	31
Lecture 3: Perception	41
Lecture 4: Understanding	61
Lecture 5: Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness	83
Lecture 6: The Freedom of Self-Consciousness: Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness	101
Lecture 7: Reason as Observation of Nature	125
Lecture 8: Reason as Observation of Self-Consciousness	147
Lecture 9: Reason as Self-Actualization of Self-Consciousness	171
Lecture 10: Reason as Individuality Real in and for Itself	195
Lecture 11: Spirit and the Ethical Order	217
Lecture 12: Self-Alienated Spirit	247
Lecture 13: From Enlightenment to Absolute Freedom and Terror	277
Lecture 14: Morality	293
Lecture 15: From Natural Religion to Religion in the Form of Art	317
Lecture 16: Revealed Religion	343

Lecture 17: Absolute Knowing	359
Works Cited	385
Index	387
About the Author	395

# Preface

The following work rests on the shoulders of two individuals, who have paved the way for a proper understanding of Hegel's most misunderstood masterpiece, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Back in my second philosophy course during my sophomore year at Yale, Kenley Royce Dove introduced me to the revolutionary project of Hegel's work, laying out its due and indispensable role as the introduction to foundation free systematic philosophy. Much more recently, conversations with Robert Bruce Berman and readings of drafts of his book on *The Phenomenology of Spirit* have provided me with an outline understanding of how the whole argument of the work must unfold. I have here attempted to fill out the details and confirm to what extent *The Phenomenology of Spirit* succeeds in bringing us to the threshold of doing philosophy without foundations.

The text at hand is based upon the lectures I gave in my 2011 spring term graduate seminar on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* at the University of Georgia. I want to thank Graham Schuster for recording the class sessions and making the recordings available and Samuel Abney for transcribing those recordings.



## *Lecture 1*

# **Introduction**

### PART 1

Does philosophy need an introduction? It has become almost a natural assumption in modern times that before one can truly think what is, one first must investigate knowing and certify its authority.

This assumption has issued from an understandable skepticism of all attempts to know immediately what is true, to read off directly the content of what is in its own right, or, in other words, to do ontology as first philosophy and make absolute claims about objects. Whenever such claims are made, it is always possible to question the validity of the knowing that is employed and the appropriateness of any content that is affirmed. Thus it seems inevitable that one first has to investigate knowing and authenticate its own claims before one can determine the truth about any object.

This preliminary undertaking has come to be widely pursued starting with early modern philosophy, many of whose classic representatives, such as Descartes and the Empiricists, focus on beginning philosophical inquiry by reflecting upon the I, human understanding, or consciousness in general. This common strategy comes to a head with Kant, who regards what he is doing as inaugurating a genuinely critical philosophy avoiding the dogmatic appeal to the given undermining all prior ventures of philosophy. The Kantian so-called transcendental turn involves supplanting ontology as first philosophy and substituting epistemology as the necessary introduction to any legitimate philosophical system. That seminal move of making epistemology foundational for philosophy has been embraced by most philosophers since Kant.

The knowing put under scrutiny by such foundational epistemology may be variously characterized. It may be depicted in terms of consciousness, linguistic practice, or any sort of cultural convention held to condition know-

ing. However knowing gets construed, it is held to be the preliminary topic of investigation and what is knowable is held to be determined by the character of knowing.

The assumption that one must first investigate knowing before knowing what is rests on certain presuppositions of its own. Primary among these is the assumption that knowing and its object are different from one another and independently determined.

The presumption that knowing always addresses something it confronts, something that has an independent otherness, is built into the very possibility of doing foundational epistemology, of investigating cognition before attempting to address what is. To be able to examine knowing without making claims about objects of knowledge, what knowing is must be separate and distinct from objects of knowledge. The very difference between knowing and its object has to be taken for granted if one is to be able to investigate knowing without making claims about objects and to do so prior to cognizing objects. Otherwise epistemological claims are no less ontological, undercutting the driving impetus of the critical turn.

Consequently, the whole move to make epistemology primary itself presupposes a fundamental opposition between knowing and its object. If one considers that assumed opposition, however, one readily finds that it renders knowing impossible. This is true whether knowing attempts to bridge the opposition and obtain knowledge of its object by functioning as an active instrument or as a passive medium.

Given the assumed opposition of knowing and its object, cognition might seem only able to get at what is other than itself by taking some active role, by doing something to what it is trying to know. In other words, knowing might figure as an instrument that comes to its object and acts upon it so as to bring it into purview and grasp what it is. If, however, knowing is an instrument that acts upon its object, what its activity furnishes is not the object as it is in its own right. What knowing as instrument gives itself is instead the object as it has been acted upon by knowing, the object as it has been altered by the activity of knowing.

To escape this difficulty, the knowing that stands over and against its object might try to comprehend that object not by acting upon it, but by somehow bringing the object to itself through a passive receptivity, by being a medium through which the object comes to be known. Here again, however, success seems precluded. If knowing is a medium through which the object in some way transmits itself, what is obtained is not the object as it is apart from its transmission through the medium but rather the object as it is refracted through the medium.

If we seek to counteract what knowing does to its object as either an active instrument or a passive medium by subtracting the effect of the activity or receptivity of knowing, we just end up where we started. After all, if

we subtract the activity of knowing from its object, we are left with the object as something we confront, but do not yet know. Similarly, if we subtract the refraction of the medium, we are left opposing an object that has yet to be transmitted to our cognition. In either case, knowing that stands in opposition to an independently determined object proves to be untenable. This result is of fatal significance for foundational epistemology to the degree that the latter rests upon the assumption that knowing is distinct from its object, an assumption that renders cognition unworkable, whether it functions actively or passively.

Another closely related problem afflicts the attempt to begin philosophizing with an introductory epistemology. This problem lies in how foundational epistemology automatically involves a distinction between the knowing that it puts under investigation and the knowing that it employs in performing the investigation. When we turn to investigate knowing as a critical preliminary, as something to be done apart from knowing the object of knowledge, the knowing under investigation is necessarily a knowing that is distinct from its object. Its object is not knowing, but something confronting knowing as an independent other. By contrast, the knowing that we use in examining knowing is a knowing of knowing. We, the critical philosopher or the transcendental investigator have knowing as our object. Yet, because the knowing that is our object is a knowing of an object distinct from itself, the knowing under investigation is also different from the cognition we employ in examining it. Since our knowing of knowing is different from the knowing we put under scrutiny, we end up being just as dogmatic as the philosophers who begin by doing ontology. For just as they do not investigate the knowing they employ, so we leave our own cognition of knowing unexamined when we scrutinize the knowing of objects. Just as dogmatic ontologists directly take up being as something given, so we, the “critical” philosophers, directly take up knowing as something given. In doing so, we are employing a knowing that itself is not under investigation and is necessarily different from what it investigates. Therefore, our knowing faces the same problems that render unworkable the knowing we are investigating.

Given the difference between our knowing of knowing and the knowing we investigate, how can our knowing get at what is distinct from it? Is our cognition, the knowing of the transcendental investigator, of the foundational epistemologist, going to act as an instrument? Or is our cognition going to be passively receptive? In either case, can this knowing that is different from what it investigates have any chance of success?

Now, this difficulty might lead us to think that knowing is such that it cannot possibly know anything absolute. Cognition, it seems, can only know phenomena or appearances, for, instead of arriving at anything independently objective, anything true without qualification, all we get at is how the object is determined by our knowing in one way or another.

Yet, if we were to take the view that this is all that can be achieved, our undertaking seems to be a futile, as well as incoherent venture. We are dealing with a knowing that cannot get at knowledge, properly speaking, while we make a knowledge claim about this by characterizing knowing such that it cannot know anything, including knowing, as it is in itself.

Considering these problems, which have plagued almost all modern philosophy, it might appear that we could simply leave behind the fear of getting at the truth of what is, which, by trying to avoid error by turning first to investigate knowing, has fallen into a hopelessly ruinous predicament. Perhaps we can just now set out and know without worrying about any prior introductory investigation of knowing. We could regard ourselves as engaged in a bona fide knowing, a knowing that is not stuck with knowledge of phenomena that are relative to cognition by being determined by or transmitted through it in one way or another. Yet simply to set off to know with the resolve to succeed is itself just an appearance in that there is nothing about our engagement that allows it to be manifestly the real McCoy, that is, cognition as it genuinely is, rather than an imposter. At the outset of philosophical investigation, any resolve that we are doing something that can get hold of what is true is just an empty assurance. For at the start, whatever we do has no more authority than any other competing enterprise.

The above train of thought encapsulates the reflections with which Hegel opens the introduction to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*,<sup>1</sup> and at this juncture, at the very end of paragraph 76,<sup>2</sup> he proceeds to tell us something that could appear to be completely inexplicable. Hegel declares that in light of what has been presented, the only thing we can do is to take up knowing as it appears, to address knowing as a phenomenon and, in that regard, to engage in a phenomenology.

What does it mean to take up knowing as a phenomenon and what would this involve that would be different from following the “natural assumption” that philosophy must start by investigating knowing? In turning to investigate knowing as first philosophy, as foundational epistemology, one is attempting to get at the truth of knowing and to make absolute claims about what cognition is in itself. By contrast, in addressing knowing as a phenomenon, we are not making any absolute claims about it. Instead we are simply taking knowing as something given, about which nothing further is maintained other than that we have this content, this given, as our subject matter. In this respect, by taking up knowing as a phenomenon, we are not going to be making any claims about what it is in itself. We are simply stipulating it as a content. Yet, why do this?

Well, by doing so, we refrain from making any unqualified immediate claims about knowing, escaping the dogmatism that afflicts foundational epistemology. Moreover, we avoid making the specific claims about knowing being an instrument or a medium that renders cognition unworkable. On



the other hand, we do not revert to the pre-critical strategy of simply reading off the character of what is. Rather than undertaking ontology or foundational epistemology, we are merely considering knowing as a given that is stipulated as a phenomenon, as something that is expressly taken for granted and not regarded as something absolute in any fashion.

Of course, we, who follow Hegel's lead, are not just taking any knowing as an appearance. We are taking up the appearance of knowing characterized in a specific way. Namely, the knowing that is taken up as a phenomenon is the knowing that the natural assumption takes knowing in itself to be. What Hegel presents as the one available alternative to escape falling into the pitfalls of dogmatic or critical philosophies is observing as a phenomenon the knowing that is characterized as confronting a given, as opposing an object independent of and distinct from itself.

This is the very construal of knowing that is taken for granted by modern philosophy in making epistemology foundational. It is a characterization of knowing, which, if identified with knowing as such, is equivalent to the presumption that knowing in general has assumptions in that knowing always addresses something given to it, that knowing always addresses an object independently determined that it opposes, that knowing is always distinct from its object. This is the construal of knowing to which we, the phenomenological observers of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, are going to be turning. In so doing, we are not going to claim that this is what knowing really is. We are just going to treat this as a construal of knowing that we stipulate, that we take up in this respect as just an appearance. What we are going to be doing, in thinking along with Hegel's investigation, is observing how this construal of knowing works itself out on its own terms in attempting to legitimate itself, to justify its knowledge claims, and, in this regard, to justify the whole project that presumes that knowing is of this character.

In turning to investigate this construal of knowing as a phenomenon, we are not going to claim that this is what knowing really is or that this is not what knowing really is or that it has some further status. We are just going to observe this stipulated framework of knowing at work, a framework that exhibits that all too familiar view that knowing always has presuppositions, that knowing always confronts some given that serves as its standard of truth, that knowing always has a foundation in the general sense of having some factor independent of itself that is the source of legitimation for its claims.

Hegel invites us to observe this, as if we should by now be clear as to why we have no other viable option. What, then, is the point of setting out on this phenomenological investigation? Of key importance is that we will here be dealing with the construal of knowing that presumes that knowing has assumptions without our making any assumptions about it and without bringing any standards of our own into play. Instead, we will allow this phenomenon of knowing to examine itself. This signifies a fundamental departure from

foundational epistemology, which investigates a knowing different from its own cognition and, in so doing, examines a cognition that does not examine itself, but is examined by an investigator who employs a cognition that is not subject to examination. Here, by contrast, we will be observing a knowing examining itself, which allows us to avoid making any knowledge claims of our own.

Hegel characterizes as consciousness the knowing that is presumed to always confront something distinct from itself, to always confront a given, to always have a foundation that serves as the standard of truth. In identifying this construal of knowing as a construal of consciousness, Hegel is not making an argument that this is what consciousness really is. It might turn out, however, that there is some psychological appropriateness to this picture of consciousness. Consciousness might be that type of psychological subjectivity that treats its mental content as being the determination of something that it confronts. In any event, whether or not consciousness as such contains a constitutive subject-object opposition, is not here being argued. “Consciousness” just serves to identify a knowing characterized as having a polar character of its own. Namely, consciousness here signifies a knowing that relates itself to something given to it, to something it opposes. Accordingly, the construal of knowing that goes by the name of consciousness and is defined by the so-called opposition of consciousness has two aspects to it.

On the one hand, knowing as phenomenon has as its object something given in its own right, apart from knowing. In that respect there is an asymmetry between the two poles of the relationship—namely, the object does not need knowing to be what it is, whereas the knowing in question is dependent upon relating to the object. Otherwise, there is no knowing. So knowing here signifies a cognition that relates to an object it confronts. The object, for its part, is what it is in itself, independent of that relation.

Hegel characterizes these two poles of the phenomenon of knowing in a variety of ways. On the one hand, he applies the terms “certainty” and “truth” to these two poles, with certainty comprising the relation of knowing to the object it confronts and the truth of knowing comprising the object it confronts as it is in itself. The object is the truth of knowing because it is the standard for the knowledge claims that knowing makes. After all, knowing is concerned with knowing the object as it is in itself, apart from knowing.

By contrast, knowing’s certainty is its own subjective relationship to the object. As Hegel observes, one can also characterize this aspect as the concept knowing has of its object, insofar as that concept is the determinate construal of the object, which is given through knowing’s relation to it.

If we were to go about evaluating knowing by judging to what extent its certainty or concept has truth, we would find ourselves having to introduce a standard of truth of our own, thereby falling prey to the kind of skeptical doubts that question any direct appeal to what is or, for that matter, any direct

appeal to knowing. Even if we could avoid the problem of coming up with a standard, we would still have to test the correspondence of knowing with its standard, raising the question of what gives our adjudication any authority? The characterization of knowing as a phenomenon, however, relieves us of having to perform either of these tasks, with all of the problems that would introduce. This is because, in the first place, knowing as consciousness contains its standard within itself. It contains its standard of truth within itself because it is a knowing of an object it opposes. The object that is for knowing is its standard of truth precisely because it is regarded to be something given apart from knowing and thereby having a character in itself. That standard is contained in knowing, as part of the polar relation of knowing. It is not something opaque or outside of knowing.

In addition, knowing is the comparison of its knowledge claim with its standard. Insofar as knowing contains both sides of certainty and truth, knowing is aware of its relation to its object and of the object to which it relates. Knowing itself thereby contains the terms to be compared and performs the comparison.

Taken together, these features signify that the phenomenon of knowing that we have hypothesized is such that it engages in examining its own knowledge claims. Moreover, with this self-examination built into the structure of consciousness, the structure of knowing that takes something for granted, that has a foundation, something is bound to happen through this comparison. Namely, insofar as there is a distinction between knowing and its object, when knowing comes to compare its object with its construal of it, knowing discovers that the object, to the extent that it falls within knowing, is not the object as it is apart from knowing. The standard that enters into the comparison is the object as it is given for knowing and since it is the object as it is given for knowing, the knowing examining itself experiences that the object that it confronts is not what it appeared to be—namely, something given apart from knowing. Rather, the object that it confronts is the object as it is for knowing, which is a different content.

As Hegel points out, to the extent that what knowing confronts is altered, knowing's relation to it is also altered.<sup>3</sup> This is unavoidable, because knowing's polar structure consists in relating to what it confronts. So Hegel, notes, given the structure of knowing construed as consciousness, our observed phenomenon of knowing necessarily undergoes a transformation through the comparing of its terms, which it cannot help but perform in its constitutive relating to the object it confronts.<sup>4</sup> In so doing, knowing transforms itself into what now can be considered a new shape of consciousness. It is still consciousness because, once again, there is a distinction between the terms in question, between knowing's relating to its object and that to which it relates.

Hegel points out that this transformation comprises a process in which consciousness must relinquish its certainty and doubt its initial relating to the

object.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he suggests, this process can be regarded as a path to despair because each successive shape that emerges is subject to the same transformation.<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, the process is not devoid of an outcome. The collapse of a candidate for knowledge of the object does not result in nothing determinate. Rather, the movement, as Hegel portrays it, is one in which the examination by knowing of its own relationship to its object leads to an experience of the object as different from what it has been taken to be. Knowing now confronts a distinct content as its standard of truth and the relationship to it is now different insofar as knowing confronts a different object. The result is therefore not a mere negation. Instead of comprising an empty otherness, the result is a determinate negation, a determinate otherness. Further, what the new candidate for object or what confronts knowing has emerged to be is determined by the character of the shape from which it arises.

Consequently, there is something necessary about what has developed. The starting point may be purely stipulated, as a resolve to examine knowing as it appears, where the knowing in question is postulated to be a knowing distinct from its object, confronting a given that is the foundation and presupposed standard of its knowledge claims. Yet, having been stipulated, the phenomenon of knowing under observation now operates upon itself and does so in a way where what emerges is determined by the shape it begins with, with each successive shape arising from that which precedes it.

This may entail a necessary development, but it seems to offer only an ongoing destruction of knowledge claims without end. There is, however, already reason for surmising that the development can come to a closure, a closure that would signify the completed observation of the totality of shapes that foundational knowing can take in its quest to authenticate itself. What serves as the motor of the development is the difference between knowing and its object. So long as there remains a difference between knowing's relating to its object and the object as it is in itself, knowing, in addressing the object as it is for knowing, will find itself confronting an object different from what it takes the object to be. This will then lead to a new shape of consciousness involving a revised construal of the object and a new relation to it. If, however, the object as it confronts knowing and knowing's relation to it come to be indistinguishable, no discrepancy will arise and there will be no further development. The motor engendering different shapes will cease to function insofar as the constitutive opposition of consciousness has itself collapsed and been eliminated. Thus, the nature of the development of the subject matter is such that it can have one possible terminus consisting in foundational knowing's removal of its own constitutive dependency upon an assumed given serving as its standard of truth.

Hegel briefly characterizes what this one possible termination can comprise at several points in the introduction. On the one hand, he tells us that the

entire succession of shapes of consciousness is not just a path of doubt, but rather a self-consummating skepticism.<sup>7</sup> Skepticism is at work when the knowing under consideration finds itself compelled to transform the poles of its cognition, but this undermining of each shape of knowing consummates itself. That is, the process comes to an end, achieving some kind of closure.

Hegel further characterizes this closure as occurring when consciousness comes to grasp its own true nature.<sup>8</sup> Of course, if consciousness is going to grasp its own true nature, it must arrive at a point where it has already undermined its own defining opposition. This is because for consciousness to know its own true nature, it must discover its object to be itself, to be no different than itself. Closure is thereby achieved when consciousness truly understands itself, which can only occur when its concept of itself and its object do correspond.

Finally, Hegel suggests that this true self-comprehension involves, somehow or other, a recollection of all of the shapes that knowing takes in distinguishing itself from its object.<sup>9</sup> This means that consciousness will achieve closure when it arrives at a configuration where the object that it confronts is its own entire development. That will provide the consummation at which, as Hegel describes it, an absolute knowing is achieved.

What distinguishes this absolute knowing, which will be addressed in the final chapter of the work, is that it consists in the elimination of knowing as it has been construed throughout this phenomenology. Absolute knowing no longer involves any cognition as cognition has heretofore been observed. Absolute knowing is not a privileged standpoint, from which what is in itself is unraveled, nor is it some privileged given that provides some kind of absolute truth. Instead, absolute knowing is going to be the starting point of a knowing that can manage not to take anything for granted, not to confront anything given, and not to make any claims about what is or about knowing.

If the phenomenological investigation of knowing as it appears arrives at this, its one possible consummation, it would establish that knowing that has presuppositions, knowing that has foundations, knowing that confronts a given, undermines itself through its own workings. In so doing, phenomenology would reveal that it is not the fate of cognition to be confined to this construal. Phenomenology would thereby remove the bar to a knowing that can take nothing for granted. Presuppositionless knowing would no longer have to operate on the basis of an arbitrary assurance that such knowing is possible and can now be pursued. Instead, the very attempt to uphold knowing as something that has a foundation, as something that has assumptions, as something that confronts the given, would have shown itself to be not only incapable of authenticating itself, but to lead through its own self-examination to the elimination of the difference between knowing and its object. Hegel thus here offers the project of a phenomenology that may pave the way

for engaging in an undertaking that can avoid all assurances, assumptions, and preconceptions about being or knowing.

To better understand the nature of the project, it is important to be clear about the role of the phenomenological observer, the “we” who stipulate a construal of knowing without making any further claims. We just put it before us and we observe it examining itself. Although we refrain from introducing any standard of truth of our own or from judging whether the knowledge claims correspond to any such standard, our “pure” observation still makes a positive contribution. As Hegel points out, we do add something to the self-examination of consciousness. We ourselves are in a position to observe how each of the particular shapes of consciousness emerges from what precedes it and to see how it emerges as part of a necessary development.<sup>10</sup>

This succession is not something that consciousness itself confronts, because when a new shape of consciousness emerges from the inversion of consciousness that takes place at each stage along the way, consciousness remains just a particular shape that has a particular object, a particular given that it is engaged in knowing. It does not confront as its object two shapes of consciousness as they succeed one another. Eventually, what may turn out to bring the whole development to consummation might well involve a shape of consciousness that, by addressing that entire development, eliminates the distinction between its relating to the object and the object itself. We will have to see whether that is the case or not. Of course, the answer will only come up at the very end of our observations.

Hegel does not call the investigation that follows *The Phenomenology of Consciousness*, even though the introduction we have been thinking through leads us to expect that we are about to engage in a science of the experience of consciousness. Phenomenology will have a scientific character, even though it serves to make possible genuine science, that is, genuine philosophy. This is because once phenomenology stipulates its subject matter, the ensuing development has an internal necessity residing in the process by which the observed subject matter examines itself. We do not inject the twists and turns of the argument. They arise out of the shape of knowing that is on the table. Nonetheless, as nonarbitrary as the succession of shapes of consciousness may be, Hegel is unwilling to subsume their parade under the rubric of “consciousness.” Instead, he titles his work *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Moreover, if one looks at the table of contents, one finds that the work is divided into different sections, of which only two are labeled in terms of some sort of consciousness. *Phenomenology* falls into a threefold division. The first section is entitled “Consciousness” and itself contains a series of different shapes of consciousness. This section leads to a second, called “Self-Consciousness,” which holds a whole slew of successive shapes. Last,

there is a third section, entitled “Reason,” by far the longest and most encompassing part, stretching to the very end of the work. The “Reason” section is itself divided in a fourfold way. First, there is a section entitled, “Reason” itself, followed by a section called “Spirit,” which is followed by a section called “Religion,” which leads to the final section called “Absolute Knowing.”

Despite their different titles, all of these sections involve shapes of consciousness in that they contain forms of knowing that make knowledge claims within a framework where the knowing under consideration confronts something given to it, something distinct from itself. Knowing, however, takes on a very broad reach, for we are going to encounter a gallery of shapes that involve normative examinations undertaken not just by a single consciousness but by conventions involving a plurality of subjects. All kinds of cultural conventions will figure in the phenomenological development insofar as they involve making value judgments in respect to some standard of truth that is taken to be given to the evaluating standpoint. The content that will present itself under the guise of the science of the experience of consciousness will therefore have a remarkably expansive character, although all along a common problematic will be working itself out. What “Spirit” signifies and how it enters in at a specific stage of the development remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, it is important to keep in mind that Hegel’s reference to the “experience of consciousness” does not apply to the empirical domain in general. Rather, “experience” in the *Phenomenology* specifically refers to the process of “inversions” whereby each shape of consciousness discovers that what it took to be the object in itself is only what the object is for consciousness, leading to a new construal of the object by a new shape of consciousness.

## PART 2

*The Phenomenology of Spirit* turns out to have a huge wealth of content and this has encouraged thinkers to draw from its cornucopia of material with the wildest abandon to pursue concerns completely alien to the work’s defining project. This use and misuse began early on, most famously in the case of some of the first readers and students of Hegel, such as Kierkegaard and Marx. *The Phenomenology of Spirit* appeared in 1807, when Hegel was thirty seven and it was Hegel’s first published book. He would not publish many others in his lifetime. *The Phenomenology* was followed by *The Science of Logic*, published in several installments, the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, whose several editions provided an outline of Hegel’s philosophical system for use by students attending his university lectures, and

finally the *Philosophy of Right*, which presented a more detailed development of one of the parts of the *Encyclopedia*. These four books are all that Hegel himself actually published, but student transcripts of his lectures were posthumously edited and published, eventually taking up the greater bulk of Hegel's collected works.

Until the very end of his career, Hegel continued to refer back to the *Phenomenology* and to reaffirm that it serves the function of introducing philosophy proper. This propaedeutic function has been largely ignored by subsequent readers, who have equally largely ignored the specifically *phenomenological* character of its investigation. Anyone who takes the *Phenomenology* seriously on its own terms cannot fail to recognize that the whole mass of material that it takes up and all the claims that are asserted are never advanced by Hegel as systematic claims about truth in any unqualified way. Rather, all the claims in question are being put forward by the phenomenon of knowing under consideration, so that the claims being advanced and the transformations these claims undergo really do not have any direct bearing upon the topics in question. Nonetheless, most readers have treated Hegel's phenomenology as if it were not a propaedeutic introduction that paves the way for genuine philosophical thinking, but as if it were a systematic work of philosophy proper. Thereby they have employed the arguments that the knowing under observation makes as if they were unqualified philosophical arguments.

You see this early on when the young Marx annotated the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and wrote a commentary of sorts that later, after his death, became published as the *1844 Manuscripts*.<sup>11</sup> There Marx seizes upon a part of the "Self-Consciousness" section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the so-called master-slave shape, and treats it as if it had something systematic to tell us about the relation of labor and capital.

Marx's misuse would be replicated by legions of subsequent commentators, many of whom would remain fixated on that "master-slave" discussion. Perhaps most notable among these was the influential Russian *émigré* Alexandre Kojève, who gave very famous lectures on the *Phenomenology* in Paris attended by all those who later become luminaries in French thought after World War II.<sup>12</sup> Like Marx, Kojève treated the *Phenomenology* not as a propaedeutic, but as a systematic work in its own right, as a work truthfully conceiving all the different matters that enter into it, telling us about the nature of ethical community, of morality, of religion, and of all the historical periods and cultural formations that appear to come into play.

One should be fundamentally suspicious of all such endeavors that lose sight of the fact that this is a phenomenological investigation in which the claims being made are not affirmed by us or Hegel or in any unconditioned manner. They are instead being made by a construal of knowing that is taken



up as a phenomenon, without any further commitments about its authority or about anything else.

A more proper use of the *Phenomenology* lies in taking the different shapes of consciousness as forms of foundational justification that can be employed to get a handle on epistemological projects that make normative claims in a similar manner. In drawing such comparisons, one is not engaged in philosophical investigation proper. Rather, one is making empirical claims about what certain authors and certain cultural practices may be doing, namely, that they are engaged in evaluations that inhabit the opposition of consciousness in one way or another. Proceeding from this empirical judgment, one can then make use of the *Phenomenology* to subject them to an internal critique. Doing so is something very different from taking the different construals of objects in the *Phenomenology* as being objective truths.

To get a firm sense of how Hegel's investigation is a phenomenology, it is useful to compare it with some other analogous undertakings. To begin with, it is worth thinking about Socrates and what Socrates is doing when he examines the claims of others. Significantly, Socrates does not make unqualified claims of his own but rather questions those advanced by others. Socrates has little choice, since, after all, he claims to be aware of only one thing, his own ignorance. Accordingly, he is in no position to judge the knowledge claims of others by bringing in his own standards and applying those standards. Lacking knowledge of anything but his own ignorance, all Socrates can do is ask questions of others. He has no positive answers to offer them. Moreover, Socrates cannot even determine what questions to ask. Lacking all positive knowledge that might provide some direction for his own questioning, Socrates's questions are determined by and dependent upon what claims are made by others. All he can do is examine them and ask them to legitimate their own claims. Socrates's questioning elicits from them an attempt to justify their claims in terms of their own presumptions. Since Socrates cannot evaluate their claims by comparing them to a truth he does not know, he must subject them instead to an immanent critique, which questions the coherence and completeness of their own grounds of justification.

The Socratic immanent critique can never certify the unconditional truth of anything it addresses. This is because Socratic immanent critique always proceeds from the claims and stipulations that are being made by the individual who Socrates questions. At best, Socrates can reveal the inadequacy of the attempts made to justify the claims he questions. He cannot, however, establish the untruth of the claims themselves, for all Socrates can show is that either his interlocutors do not have resources sufficient to legitimate their claims or that their claims are incompatible with other things to which they subscribe. The outcome of Socratic questioning is always at best rather negative. The individuals under interrogation will come to admit that they do not know what they thought they knew.

How is Socratic questioning different from Hegel's phenomenological investigation? There are obviously some similarities in that Socrates is addressing the claims of others and is getting them to examine their truth claims by relying on "truths" they subscribe to, rather than importing external standards. Certainly Socrates often seems to be leading his victims on, putting words in their mouth, yet in the end, whatever figures in the argument is something to which they agree.

Nevertheless, there are several important differences. First of all, the knowledge claims that Socrates questions are contingently given. There is no connection between the examination of one such claim and the examination of any other. The outcome of an interrogation does not lead to any determinate alternative cognition. Accordingly, each engagement of Socrates's questioning can be depicted in a dialogue separate from the rest, without any connecting thread. Moreover, there is nothing about Socratic questioning that promises any closure. Socrates can continue his questioning so long as he encounters individuals who make truth claims. They can always be found so long as Socrates is wandering the streets of Athens, has not had to drink the hemlock, and has not yet succeeded in turning all the available interlocutors into people who know nothing other than their own ignorance and must now set out on their own questioning of others.

In any event, the self-replicating scourge of Socratic questioning does not go beyond itself. It is stuck in what Hegel might call the path of skepticism and despair. Even if Plato may go on to advance his own philosophical truths, open a school of philosophy, and produce philosophical writings, Socrates does not provide any bridge to his protégé's activity by continuing his gadfly occupation.

There is something self-renewingly static about the Socratic enterprise that distinguishes it from the propaedeutic self-annulling action of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. The same thing could be said of the activity characterizing the ancient skeptic. Once more, certain parallels with phenomenology come to the fore. The ancient skeptics, as exemplified by Sextus Empiricus, are concerned and only concerned with attending to appearances. They aim to stick just with phenomena and refrain from making any claims about them one way or another. The defining activity of a skeptic consists in contending with truth claims put forward by others by trying to show that those claims cannot be defended against counterclaims and that therefore one ought to suspend judgment about the matter in question. The aim of the skeptical activity is a mental tranquility that happens to result from suspending judgment. The skeptic realizes that he cannot maintain that mental tranquility *must* result from the suspension of judgment, because that would require making a knowledge claim of his own. The skeptic just experiences these phenomena without affirming that they possess any truth.

Like Socrates, the ancient skeptic is engaged in a practice that can never come to any closure. This remains the case even after Sextus Empiricus lays out the tropes of argument that show how knowledge claims are relative to some factor or other—relative to differences in the knower, differences in the object, and differences in the relation of knower and object, all of which casts in doubt claims made about any object. The skeptic is never able to ensure that the employment of these tropes can put an end to the skeptical activity, guaranteeing that we can once and for all suspend judgment. To do that the skeptic would have to be making absolute claims about the relativity of knowing. Whereas the so-called academic makes the self-annihilating claim that we know that knowing is impossible, the ancient skeptic realizes that we cannot affirm that coherently. As Sextus Empiricus recognizes, at best, we have to continue in our enterprise of confronting claims not just about phenomena but about what truly is and see if we can cast them in suspicion by showing that there is a counterposition that is equally defensible.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the ancient skeptics are concerned to observe, rather than dispute the phenomena. Yet unlike Hegel's phenomenology, the skeptical enterprise is an ongoing practice with no definite end. Like Socrates, the ancient skeptic must go on facing contingently given views, and do so in no necessary order. The judgments to be put in suspension are randomly encountered whenever individuals go on making such judgments.

Here what are being shown to be mere appearances are the *objects* about which truth claims are being made. The skeptic is attempting to have us refrain from making judgments about these objects and just accept them as appearances. The skeptical enterprise is not concerned with just taking *knowing* as an appearance.

The focus on treating objects, rather than configurations of knowing, as appearances, is central to the modern phenomenology that Edmund Husserl inaugurates. Husserl is doing something very similar to Kant when he undertakes, through his *Epoché*, to treat objects of knowledge as phenomena. Husserl invites us to turn away from the "natural attitude," which here signifies the view that takes what is given to us as being what is in its own right. Instead, through his *Epoché*, we are to regard objects as phenomena, that is, as meanings representing how things appear to us given how our consciousness relates to them. Husserlian phenomenology engages then in observing how different types of objects are determined by the way in which knowing relates to them.<sup>14</sup>

This might appear to follow Hegel's *Phenomenology*, but there clearly are fundamental differences. First of all, Husserl does not examine a phenomenon of knowing that examines itself. The Husserlian phenomenological observer is the one who attempts to find out what are the acts of consciousness that are constitutive of certain kinds of objects by reflecting on inner experience and uncovering what seem to be the constant "essentialities" in the

consciousness of different types of objects. Although this appears to be a self-examination, the consciousness under view is always different from the phenomenological observing consciousness that has it as its object.

Accordingly, Husserl's phenomenological investigator plays a very active role, while engaging in a knowing that is just as distinct from the knowing it examines as is the cognition of the Kantian critical philosopher. Once more, the phenomena are the objects, not the knowing under consideration.

Secondly, Husserl takes the knowing under consideration to be absolute, to be the framework of cognition in general. This framework is characterized as intentionality, which involves the same opposition between the act of knowing and the object that knowing confronts to which Hegel ascribes the label, "consciousness." Unlike Hegel, however, this construal of knowing as intentionality or consciousness is regarded as being fundamental and insurmountable. For that reason, Husserl regards the opposition of consciousness, going by the name of intentionality, as being presuppositionless. It does not count as something merely stipulated about which no further claims can be made. Rather, Husserl points to it as a structure of knowing that is determinative of all knowable objectivity of any sort.

Admittedly, Husserl, unlike Kant, seeks to extend his phenomenological investigation, his investigation of how knowing constitutes its objects, to logic and other terms that Kant simply takes for granted.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, Husserl's greater degree of self-reflection does not prevent him from staying in pursuit of the same general project of foundational epistemology. The task remains one of turning to investigate knowing, where the knowing under consideration is to be known absolutely, as being what knowing truly is, and where knowing is regarded as being determinative of what can be known. In no respect is the knowing under examination something to be overcome through its own immanent self-examination.

### PART 3

Despite certain similarities, Hegel's *Phenomenology* is clearly fundamentally different than Socratic questioning, ancient skepticism, or Husserlian phenomenology. It is undertaking something that has not been done before or after. Yet is its task really as inescapable as Hegel makes it out to be? We cannot avoid confronting the question, which looms over our entire exploration, of whether this phenomenological investigation is really necessary. Do we need a phenomenological introduction to philosophy proper? It would be so much easier to leave it aside. As we shall discover, this introduction is a very daunting undertaking, one that is extremely difficult to make one's way through. The path of observation is very detailed and terrifically dense. In fact, it is hard to think of any work of philosophy more challenging than

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, with perhaps the sole exception of his *Science of Logic*.

Is life too short to have to slug one's way through the *Phenomenology*'s looming morass? Can one not satisfy one's philosophical yearnings without having to bite the bullet and tackle Hegel's challenge and think it through blow by blow? Why not move on to other things that seem to be more pressing, matters having to do with conduct and the normativity of institutions and the like. One seemingly can deal with such subject matters because at least one can presume that there are agents who are able to determine themselves and one can speak about conduct in general, responsible activity, and on that basis deal with the normative issues.

But what if one really wanted to question whether agents really are what they are presumed to be and indeed, question whether there really are agents? Does one not really have to think through and come truly to know what are the preconditions for normative agency, as well as the preconditions for various cultural activities like fine art and philosophy itself? It might seem like we have to examine the nature of mind, but even doing that seems to require taking a lot for granted, such as the real preconditions of mind, including nature in both its inanimate and animate formations.

And, then, what about conceiving nature itself? Does that not require all sorts of categories that one has to understand and legitimate? Would we not have to develop a systematic logic to provide the thought determinations that we need to employ in conceiving nature, mind, and the ethical world? But is the resolve to determine the truth of logic or anything else just an empty assurance? Does one not have to take one step back and do what Hegel's phenomenology is trying to accomplish?

This question is worth considering in light of the introductions that Hegel supplies for his *Science of Logic*. Hegel presents the science of logic as the genuine starting point of philosophy proper, which is followed by a systematic account of nature and then by a systematic account of mind, including intersubjectivity and all the productions of rational agency, from the institutions of right to the cultural formations of art, religion, and philosophy.

Hegel precedes the actual argument of the Science of Logic with two introductory discussions that serve to enable the reader to make sense of how philosophy proper is to begin without falling prey to the pitfalls of dogmatic metaphysics and foundational epistemology. Can philosophy get off the ground with what Hegel provides in these introductory sections and thereby avoid having to undertake a prior phenomenological investigation?

The two introductory sections of the *Science of Logic* operate in parallel. The first questions the very idea of logic<sup>16</sup> whereas the second considers with what philosophy must begin.<sup>17</sup> Although the topics of these discussions seem distinct, each of these introductory considerations leads to the same result.

The first sets out by drawing a contrast between logical science and all other kinds of science. Logic is characterized by involving a knowing where there is no distinction between knowing and its object. Indeed, the very possibility of doing logic presumes the overcoming of any such distinction insofar as logic consists in a thinking of thinking. Due to this identity of the thinking and the object of logical investigation, logic does not make use of a cognition that it does not put under scrutiny. To be a science of valid thinking, logic must be a valid thinking of valid thinking.

In this respect, logic can make an absolute beginning, whereas by contrast, any non-logical science cannot. Non-logical sciences involve a thinking of something other than thought and any science that involves the thinking of something other than thought puts under investigation something different from the thinking it employs. Precisely because such sciences are not thinking about thinking, they are thinking about something else. Any such investigation, where there is a difference between knowing and its object, cannot make an absolute beginning, because it must employ a thinking or knowing for which it does not account in its investigation. Non-logical investigations must take up the thinking they employ as ready at hand and ready to use, assuming its authority without further ado. Accordingly, non-logical “sciences” are automatically conditioned rather than unconditioned, or relative rather than absolute, because they are relative to the assumption of the knowing or the thinking that they employ. Further, non-logical “sciences” are also relative to some preconception of their subject matter, for in order to engage in a non-logical investigation, an investigation whose object is different from the knowing of it, the object must have some given determinacy other than that of thought. The subject matter must have some definite character, for only then can non-logical knowing have something to address, something that in some respect we are already acquainted with, something that is given to us. That means, however, that any non-logical investigation, that is, any investigation where the knowing is different from its object, is doubly relative and conditioned, taking for granted both the knowing it employs and the initial characterization of its subject matter. If it did not presuppose both, it would have no means of investigation and nothing to address.

The subject matter of non-logical inquiry has to be something determinate because it is distinct from its knowing and its knowing is equally determinate because it is given in contrast to its object. Logic, whose investigation does not distinguish between knowing and object, being a thinking of thinking, cannot begin with a determinate thinking that is already on the table. Instead, logic is going to be investigating and establishing what valid thinking is, and to do so, logic can hardly presuppose the answer at the outset.

The very idea of logic, of the thinking of thinking, therefore ends up being the idea of a science that has no antecedently defined method. Since the “method” of logic is its “object,” logic equally can have no antecedently

defined subject matter. The very idea of logic, as resting upon the overcoming of any distinction between knowing and its object, is the idea of a science that is completely indeterminate in regard to both method and subject matter. Its starting point will be absolute in not being relative to any given method or any given subject matter.

Logic is going to have establish what its thinking is a thinking of, whereas, non-logical inquiry, distinguished by the difference of its thinking and subject matter, cannot have an absolute beginning. The latter rests upon dual assumptions that it is incapable of overcoming. For that reason, a non-logical discipline or, in other words, a knowing that is different from its object, cannot possibly be philosophical knowing, which grasps the unconditioned truth with an unconditioned thought.

These considerations indicate why “non-logical” knowing cannot be philosophical knowing. What such “non-logical knowing” does conform to is consciousness, understood as a shape of mind defined by an opposition between its knowing and its object.

Non-logical investigation also involves the kind of thinking that is described by formal logic. This is because formal logic, contrary to logic proper, is formal because it applies to a thinking that can be described apart from the content of what it thinks. Formal logic provides the form of a thinking that is given independently of what is thought. Therefore formal logic models a thinking that is in principle distinct from what it thinks, a kind of thinking that characterizes the opposition of consciousness. This is a thinking that finds its content beyond itself, which is why all one can think about in conceiving its formal character are  $p$ 's and  $q$ 's that have to be filled in. The thinking that formal logic construes is therefore a thinking that cannot possibly be philosophical. It is a thinking that is based upon the opposition between knowing and its subject matter, a thinking emblematic of the construal of knowing that the *Phenomenology* puts under observation.

Hegel presents these introductory reflections to pave the way for understanding why philosophy proper is going to be, at least at the outset, the science of logic. Philosophy must begin as the science of logic because that science uniquely begins with no determinate claims concerning its method or subject matter. Only when an investigation distinguishes between knowing and its object, can and must it begin with determinate claims concerning method and subject matter.

Consequently, the science of logic with which philosophy must begin is inaccessible so long as we remain captive to a construal of knowing that opposes knowing to its object. For this reason, Hegel can rightly claim that adherence to the opposition of consciousness bars the way to philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

Why then, do we still need to go through with Hegel's forbiddingly dense and expansive phenomenological investigation? Why cannot this quick reflection be sufficient to indicate that we have got to get beyond the opposi-

tion of consciousness and proceed directly with the science of logic? We must get beyond the construal of knowing that distinguishes knowing and its object. We must get beyond non-logical investigation and leave behind the characterization of cognition that leaves knowing conditioned and relative. Why is this insight not enough to begin engaging in a knowing that has no predetermined character and no predetermined subject matter?

Logic's mandate cannot possibly be more than this. At the outset, it, or alternately, philosophy, is itself an empty word, as Hegel will say.<sup>19</sup> The logic with which philosophy must begin is going to determine what its thinking is and what its object is as the result of its own labors. Indeed, to account for what it itself is, logic cannot have any predetermined character at the outset.

Yet in this very same introductory section, Hegel maintains that *The Phenomenology of Spirit* serves as an introduction to science proper and it does so by providing a deduction of the concept of science.<sup>20</sup> How can this be if philosophy proper cannot have any predetermined method, any predetermined subject matter, or any predetermined character at all? If philosophy had a predetermined character, it would have a given, conditioned character like any other competing impostor.

How then, can the concept of the science of logic or of philosophy in general have its concept deduced by the *Phenomenology of Spirit*? What would this concept be, the concept that can specify at least the starting point of an inquiry that ought to determine its own character through its own labors. Philosophy is responsible for determining what philosophy is. It must free itself from all dogmas. It has to have that negative freedom to liberate itself from unexamined opinion, from bondage to any given methodology or contents. On the other hand, philosophy has to have the positive freedom to determine through its own working whatever is to count for it. So how can philosophy need an introduction provided by what the *Phenomenology* presents?

Hegel offers an analogous puzzle in his other parallel introductory discussion in *The Science of Logic*, which is titled "With What Must the Science Begin?" Here he focuses upon the problem of the beginning of philosophy and attempts to show once more that philosophy cannot possibly begin with anything determinate. Anything determinate rests upon mediation because being determinate requires contrast with something else. Something can only be what it is in virtue of not being something else.

If philosophy were to begin with something determinate, one would need to ask, how did that determinacy get there? Why begin with this rather than something else? Something else must be responsible for starting with that beginning instead of another. So any determinate starting point is not really the beginning after all, since it depends on some other factor that puts it in place. To avoid this dilemma, philosophy has to be an empty word at the



start. It can genuinely begin only with nothing determinate. This indeterminacy of the starting point can be characterized as being. This is because being is inescapably indeterminate. After all, any attempt to determine what being is by relying on any particular characterization must go astray. Giving being some determinacy commits the fundamental blunder of characterizing being in terms of a particular being. This undermines the whole enterprise of identifying what is common to everything and it indicates the dilemma faced by any ontology.

Being, insofar as it is pure indeterminacy, is precisely the starting point with which philosophy proper must begin. Philosophy can then be that which needs no introduction, because it does not begin with anything determinate, with anything in need of mediation.

Yet, here in this second introductory discussion, Hegel once more maintains that the beginning of philosophy is somehow introduced by phenomenology.<sup>21</sup> This alleged connection between phenomenology and philosophy proper has two aspects. The outcome of phenomenology is going to yield the concept of logic and also being or indeterminacy, and somehow these two results are going to go hand in hand.

How could this be? How could that which has to be presuppositionless have a presupposition? How could that which needs no introduction need a deduction? How can a “phenomenology of spirit” introduce philosophy?

William Maker presents a compelling solution in his book *Philosophy without Foundations: Rethinking Hegel*.<sup>22</sup> As Maker argues, the *Phenomenology* provides its introductory service by showing how the knowing that has presuppositions subverts itself, removing the bar to presuppositionless knowing or philosophy. The *Phenomenology* achieves this by indicating that if one maintains that knowing has presuppositions, one ends up engaged in an epistemological enterprise that not only cannot validate its knowledge claims, but ends up eliminating the very distinction between knowing and its object, which is ingredient in the idea that knowing always has presuppositions or always confronts something different. In the *Phenomenology*, we observe presuppositional knowing undermining itself in its own attempt to be self-consistent and ending up eliminating the distinction between knowing and its object. Through this elimination, whereby knowing can no longer be distinguished from its object, we are provided with the element of logic, or what can only count as the “concept” of logic, the concept of the thinking of thinking, which has no predetermined method or subject matter, but only the negative significance of overcoming the opposition of consciousness. This is the only starting point that can provide an escape from the problems that arise when we try to start doing philosophy by thinking about something different from our thinking, where we take for granted our method and our subject matter.

In these respects, phenomenology has a necessary role to play here in preventing an indeterminate starting point from being regarded either as impossible or as completely nonsensical.

Nonetheless, might there be shortcuts that provide the same deduction without having to follow the entire itinerary of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*? Consider two such shortcuts that might allow us to escape having to climb the mountain of the *Phenomenology* in all its imposing grandeur.

First, think about the project of transcendental philosophy, which arises from what Hegel calls the natural attitude, the view that one must first engage in a knowing of knowing before knowing objects. The foundational epistemologists who take epistemology to be first philosophy are themselves engaged in a knowing of knowing. As Hegel has pointed out, knowing becomes unworkable if there is a difference between knowing and its object. This problem haunts transcendental investigation, because the knowing that investigates knowing is not the knowing under investigation. The knowing under investigation is taken up as an object that is going to be scrutinized. It does not examine itself. Rather, it is being investigated by a knowing distinct from itself because it is a knowing of objects, not self-knowing.

To overcome the problem of employing a knowing that is not under examination, it is necessary to consider what would be required for the knowing that is being investigated to be identical to the knowing that investigates it. In order for the knowing under investigation to be equivalent to the knowing that investigates it, the knowing under investigation must itself be a knowing of knowing. Valid knowing must turn out to be a knowing of knowing in order for the investigation of knowing not to be something distinct from its object, leaving the cognition of the foundational epistemologist unexamined.

If, however, the knowing being investigated by our knowing is a knowing of knowing, there is no longer any distinction between knowing and its object. Insofar as knowing no longer confronts something different from itself, the opposition of consciousness is overcome. With that opposition eliminated, we find ourselves driven into the element of logic. In other words, if the foundational investigation of knowing is going to be consistent with itself, it has to somehow construe knowing so it is no different from the examination of it. Knowing must be thought to be a knowing of knowing. Knowing must be logical, a thinking of thinking, which only establishes what valid knowing is at the close of its investigation. What we have, it seems, is a very short painless way of circumventing all the hundreds of pages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Another short cut is provided by an examination of the general problem of foundational justification. Although this problem extends beyond epistemology to all normative domains, including ethics and aesthetics, it applies generally to the wealth of material that comes up in the *Phenomenology of*

*Spirit*, whose “shapes of consciousness” come to encompass normative self-examinations in various domains.

Normative claims are made in epistemology, when knowledge is distinguished from opinion, in conduct, when right is distinguished from wrong, and in fine art, when beauty is distinguished from the lack thereof. In each domain, an assumption tends to prevail, almost as a natural assumption, that in order to validate something, it has to conform to some independently given standard of normativity. In other words, there has to be something that serves as a foundation of normative validity, without which there is no criterion for distinguishing truth from falsity, right from wrong, or beauty from what is aesthetically worthless. So it seems that we need something else to confer legitimacy upon what is to count as valid. This validity-conferring factor is the foundation of the validity that something has.

This foundational conception of justification is extremely commonplace. Generally speaking, if we ask why something is true or right or beautiful, we ask for a reason, which comprises some factor that serves as the basis for the validation in question. The reason serves as a foundation of justification, as some privileged factor that confers validity upon what is under consideration. On these all too prevalent terms, what it is to be valid or what it is to be normative is equivalent to being determined by that which confers normativity.

Yet what determines which factor is qualified to confer normativity? What ensures that the putative foundation that confers validity is the real McCoy? Does not the foundation of justification have to have its own credentials certified? And if so, how?

To be self-consistent, the foundation can have its validity determined only by itself. Otherwise, it will cede its place as the privileged factor that confers validity to some other foundation, whose own validity will then be suspect for the same reason. Yet if the foundation confers validity upon itself, the standard of validity ceases to be a foundation of something other than itself. By justifying its own justifying role, the self-grounding foundation eliminates the distinction between that which possesses validity in virtue of having it conferred upon itself by some other privileged factor, and that which confers normativity on other things. To be self-referentially consistent, the foundation has to found itself, but if it founds itself, it ceases to be a foundation. Foundational justification has ended up rendering normativity equivalent to self-determination, for what is normative can only be so by determining itself to be valid, just as what figures as a source of normativity must be the basis and object of its own validity.

Applied to the justification of knowledge claims, this signifies that the opposition of consciousness, which distinguishes the standard of knowledge from certainty, must eliminate its own opposition and revert to a self-determining, self-responsible knowing, where knowledge is no longer validated

by something distinct from itself. A self-determining knowing is, however, a knowing that can have no given form or content. It can only be what it has determined itself to be. Consequently, it is equivalent to logic and philosophy, beginning with a complete absence of predetermined, presupposed character, and only arriving at its own determination at the completion of its self-determination.

There is no coherent escape from conceiving normativity to reside in what is determined by itself. There is no alternative, because if one attempts to deny that validity lies in autonomy, one then reverts to the foundational view that what possesses validity has its validity conferred upon it by something else, which then can only consistently uphold the credentials of its foundation by eliminating the difference between what possesses and what confers justification. This is why autonomy or self-determination is the very stuff of normativity in practice, in theory, and in fine art. Heteronomy cannot sustain itself, but must collapse under its own demands and revert to an overcoming of foundations.

Does the self-elimination of foundational justification therefore relieve us of our phenomenological toils? Of course, in laying out the problem of foundational justification, all sorts of terms are employed, such as foundation, justification, consistency, and self-determination. The same can be said of the preceding shortcut and its use of knowing, object, self-knowledge, and the knowing of knowing. Can any of these terms be used with any authority or does their employment overstep the bounds of critical, non-dogmatic thinking? And if those bounds are being overstepped, does that mean that we have an inescapable phenomenological challenge before us?

Alas, how can we hope to introduce philosophy by employing arguments of our own, no matter how short and lucid they may be? Foundational epistemology and foundational justification may indeed be subject to insoluble dilemmas and incapable of consistently upholding their frameworks, but we cannot show that if our arguments depend upon contents and methodological concepts that have yet to be established. Further, we cannot pretend that our immanent critiques of foundational epistemology and foundational justification are properly phenomenological if they begin with anything more than the stipulation of the appearance of knowing. All further content must emerge through the self-examination of that stipulated phenomenon and at the start that phenomenon does not yet have all the resources that would allow for talk about the projects and problems of foundational epistemology and foundational justification. Why this is so becomes clear when we consider with what phenomenology must begin.<sup>23</sup>

## PART 4

Phenomenology takes up knowing as it appears, construed in terms of the opposition of consciousness. In the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel briefly sketched the polar character of this knowing and indicated how it examines itself without need of our positive meddling. Moreover, he has indicated how the self-examination of such knowing leads to “inversions of consciousness” whereby new shapes arise. What, however, is the initial shape from which the whole development proceeds? Specifically, with what must phenomenology begin?

Hegel opens the phenomenology proper with a particular shape that he calls “sense-certainty.” Sense-certainty is going to be characterized as that shape of consciousness where the object that consciousness opposes is confronted just with respect to its being, without any further qualification, without any mediation. The object is known simply as immediately present. The knowing of consciousness, that is, its relation to the object, or the aspect of certainty, is just as immediate as the object that serves as its standard of truth. The knowing of sense-certainty is an immediate taking in of the object as immediately given.

At the very end of the introduction to the *Phenomenology* and at the very beginning of the first chapter on sense-certainty, Hegel maintains that this is where our observation must begin. He does not explain explicitly why this is the case, but it is not hard to see that immediately taking in the immediate as something knowing confronts is tantamount to addressing the stipulated opposition of consciousness in its most minimal determination. We must begin with observing that opposition without further qualification, in its most basic configuration. If instead, we were to begin with that opposition clothed in additional specifications, that further content would be illicitly added by us rather than generated by the inversions of consciousness that the subject matter itself undergoes in examining itself.

So, if we are going to observe knowing that confronts the given, the minimal form that knowing can have is the shape of consciousness that immediately confronts the given as immediate. In this basic shape, knowing confronts what is without further specifying it and without engaging in any further activity of its own. What we here have to observe is the knowing of being in terms of the opposition of consciousness.

Although Hegel recognizes that this minimal shape of consciousness is a knowing of being, he nevertheless characterizes it as sense-certainty. That characterization appears to add all sorts of other content, in particular, all sorts of other physical, physiological, and psychological content reflecting the process of sensation. At the very least, sense-certainty addresses a sensuous manifold, a huge cornucopia of blooming, buzzing, wafting sensation in all its variegated multiplicity. As we will see, Hegel develops sense-certainty

in these rich terms. Why would this be, when the first shape of consciousness should immediately confront the given as immediate? Does not all the variegation of the sensuous manifold involve mediation?

The answer to these questions can be found by considering the contrast between how philosophy begins with being and how phenomenology begins with the consciousness of being. Philosophy makes an absolute beginning with being, based on the elimination of any opposition between knowing and its object. Here the beginning with being is equivalent to taking nothing for granted, to refraining from advancing any claims about method or subject matter, to addressing any determinate givens. Logic starts with indeterminacy, which is why being is no different from nothing.

In the *Phenomenology*, we begin with an immediate consciousness of what is immediately given. This involves not just indeterminacy, but a relationship with two contrasting poles, the aspects of certainty and truth, or knowing's relation to its object and the object as an independent factor confronting knowing. These poles cannot be in contrastive relation to one another and remain completely indeterminate. Even though each is immediate, they still possess a determinate character owing to the distinct roles they play.

For this reason, it is no accident that the object to which consciousness relates immediately with respect to just its being is more than just being. If it were completely indeterminate, the object could not confront knowing. The object therefore is something that must have an indeterminately manifold determinacy, whose mediated character is, however, not being addressed by knowing in its most rudimentary phenomenal shape. What consciousness here takes its object to be is the object as immediate, the object without further qualification, the object as simply being, as simply present to it. Consciousness cannot take the object in in any further capacity precisely because consciousness addresses what it confronts in an equally immediate fashion.

Before proceeding any further in examining the details of sense-certainty, our investigation can gain some helpful prospective perspective by sketching out the principal landmarks in the itinerary of the self-examination of phenomenal knowing. This anticipatory summary will shed light on whether the *Phenomenology* really does what it is claiming to do and, more importantly, on whether what it is attempting can be done at all.

It is important to make our way through this itinerary in its entirety, for the whole point of this enterprise really depends upon reaching the end, achieving closure, and seeing how that can be done. Hegel certainly thinks that the nature of the undertaking requires going through every move.

The details are extremely interesting in their own right and have a tremendous amount of bearing on all sorts of familiar phenomena. This should not be surprising insofar as we live in a world that has been largely populated by

thinkers, cultural formations, and ethical practices that make evaluations in foundational ways that involve what here appear as shapes of consciousness. Accordingly, we will encounter a very rich content that will resonate within and without the boundaries of philosophy.

We face a tremendous amount of material that is relentless in its density and difficulty. The *Phenomenology* does not offer us any breathing spells. Instead, one self-examination follows another without any let up until the very end.

First of all, “Sense-certainty” is going to divide itself into three successive sections, the first of which deals with the complexities of engaging in immediate reference to what is immediate, as couched in terms of knowing what is here and now. Then the discussion is going to shift to examining to what degree the immediacy of the knower, the “I,” provides a fixed basis for laying hold of what is, in a way that cannot be done by simply pointing to the given in its immediacy. A third section follows where both the here and now and the “I” are employed in trying to lay hold of the object. In each case, what sense-certainty is trying to be certain of turns out not to be the immediacy it is taken to be. Instead, the object turns out to be something mediated.

Consciousness as perception is going to take in the object as something that is mediated, perceiving instead of sensing it. The object as mediated will initially be perceived as a thing with properties. There are going to be difficulties in laying hold of the object as a thing with properties. These difficulties will exhibit the dilemmas one encounters in the Empiricists, classically represented in Locke’s struggles to grasp the object as a substrate of properties.

In addressing every shape it is crucial to focus upon how the two poles of the relation are characterized and how the self-examination engenders a new relation of two differently specified poles. We will see that in each shape a series of developments occurs before a new shape arises. These series of developments comprise successive attempts by a shape to validate its construal of its object.

We see this happening in the shape of perception. Consciousness as perception construes its mediated object by making use of a mediated cognitive activity. Problems arise and these lead to revisions within the same basic framework until the point is reached that the shape of perception is compelled to transform itself into the shape of what Hegel will call “Understanding.” Our task will be to figure out what are the basic distinctions being made, how they are related to one another, and whether the movement that ensues is not externally directed by Hegel as a kind of *deus ex machina*, but is a self-transformation of the knowing under observation.

Before turning finally to address the first shape of consciousness, it is important to distinguish between a phenomenological and a systematic treatment of consciousness. Hegel does have a systematic philosophy of mind. In

that investigation, he does not consider consciousness to be the one and only configuration of mind. Unlike other modern thinkers, he does not identify mind with consciousness. This should not be surprising insofar as Hegel identifies philosophical thinking with a kind of cognition that overcomes the opposition of consciousness. In his systematic philosophy, Hegel distinguishes three fundamental forms of mind, a preconscious psyche, consciousness, and intelligence. The preconscious psyche is a feeling self that feels its own feelings without treating its mental determinations as specifications of anything objective. Consciousness relates to its mental determinations as determinations of an object it confronts, whereas intelligence relates to its mental determinations as both subjective and objective, recognizing them to be its own intuitions, representations, and thoughts while being determinations of objects.

Hegel remarks in his systematic philosophy of mind that sensuous consciousness does not really have an awareness of time and space. Time and space themselves are not what is sensed by consciousness. That is not to say that what is sensed may not itself be temporal and spatial, but sense-certainty does not have an intuition of space and time. The intuition of space and time rather falls within intelligence.

What all this means is far from self-evident. Hegel, however, makes this point in his philosophy of mind and refers explicitly to the discussion of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology*, suggesting that reference to the here and now in that discussion may be extraneous to the argument, or perhaps, just a concrete example of an immediate reference that points to a “this.”<sup>24</sup>

Something akin to such immediate reference is at stake when more contemporary epistemologists speak of knowledge by acquaintance in distinction from knowledge by description, where one has a “rigid designation” of terms, pointing out things immediately. Hegel analogously describes sense-certainty as referring to what is for it simply as “this,” knowing its object not in terms of any mediated factor, such as descriptive terms, nor in terms of any discriminating activity, but simply by pointing to it immediately, just as “this” or alternately as what is here and now. Much of the foibles involved in this manner of immediate knowing of the immediately given revolves around what happens when one attempts to lay hold of an object by means of its being here and now or this.

In addressing sense-certainty, we must keep in mind that we are dealing with an epistemological project, a way of thinking about knowing. We are not giving an account of consciousness as an object of systematic philosophical psychology. It should therefore not be surprising that there are significant differences in how Hegel treats consciousness in his philosophy of mind and in his phenomenology.

Our investigation will not make frequent forays into the vast, ever growing secondary literature on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. There is simply too



much to keep up with and generally what one encounters fails to take cognizance of Hegel's introductory project. Most of the secondary literature instead takes the *Phenomenology* as if it were a treatise about knowing, as if it were another version of critical philosophy or of Husserlian phenomenology, making systematic claims about cognition and consciousness. If that were the case, Hegel's *Phenomenology* would lose its significance as a completely novel, truly revolutionary undertaking, which has rarely been explored in a systematic way, let alone ever duplicated.

## NOTES

1. See paras. 73–76, pp. 46–49 of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller with analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

2. All references to the paragraph numbers of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* correspond to the paragraph enumeration given in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller with analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), which follows the German edition of G. W. F. Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1952).

3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 85, p. 54.

4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 86 and 87, pp. 55–56.

5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 86, p. 55.

6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 78, p. 49.

7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 78, p. 50.

8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 77, p. 49, para. 89, p. 57.

9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 89, p. 56.

10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 87, pp. 55–56.

11. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan, ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964).

12. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1947).

13. See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, bk. 1, in Sextus Empiricus, *Selections from the Major Writings on Scepticism, Man, and God*, trans. Sanford G. Etheridge, ed. Philip P. Hallie (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985).

14. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960).

15. See Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1969).

16. See "Introduction: General Notion of Logic" in G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), 43–59.

17. See "With What Must the Science Begin?" in Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 67–78.

18. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 45.

19. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 78.

20. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 49.

21. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 68–69.

22. William Maker, *Philosophy without Foundations: Rethinking Hegel* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), 67–82.

23. A parallel presentation of the preceding discussion appeared in my article, "Is Phenomenology Necessary as Introduction to Philosophy?," *The Review of Metaphysics* 65, no. 2, iss. 258 (December 2011): 1–19.

24. Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. William Wallace together with the Zusätze in Boumann's Text (1845) trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), para. 418, p. 159.



## Lecture 2

# Sense-Certainty

In examining sense-certainty, the first shape of consciousness to be observed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it is worth keeping in mind that sense-certainty is an individual configuration of phenomenal knowing. As such, it is distinguished by a specific predetermination of the given opposing consciousness and a specific way that consciousness relates to the so-determined object.

Every observed cognition will clothe with a different content the same constituent poles of truth and certainty, of the object as it confronts knowing and of knowing's relation to its object. Thereby each configuration comprises a distinct shape of consciousness. Further, the shapes will group themselves under three broad headings. Here we are dealing with the first of three shapes that fall within the section entitled "Consciousness," which is followed by a series of shapes that are presented under the heading of "Self-Consciousness." All the remaining shapes then proceed under the title of "Reason."

What these divisions signify will become clearer as we move on, but a preliminary indication of the first major divide can be made as follows: In the shapes identified under the heading of "Consciousness" the object that consciousness confronts is distinguished from consciousness, whereas in the shapes of "Self-Consciousness" what consciousness confronts is in some respect itself.

Accordingly, in the first major section of the *Phenomenology*, we observe three different shapes of consciousness in which consciousness confronts an object distinct from itself in the broad sense of not being consciousness, of not being the "I." These three forms presumably exhaust the modes of consciousness pure and simple that do not involve shapes of self-consciousness or reason. In examining these three first shapes, it is therefore important to

consider both how they are distinguished from one another and how they exhaust the possibilities that foundational knowing has to consider its object as something distinct from the knower. Even though every shape of foundational knowing will confront something given to it, it can confront itself as given to it and take the shape of self-consciousness.

Hegel's presentation of sense-certainty unfolds in three stages. The first stage runs through paragraph 99, the second stage runs from paragraph 100 to paragraph 102, and the third stage runs from paragraph 103 to paragraph 110. Something different occurs in each of these three stages, yet they all fall within the same abiding shape. Sense-certainty does undergo certain transformations in moving from one stage to the other, but these alterations are not of the order that they engender a genuinely new object, carrying with it a new relation of knowing signaling the emergence of a new shape of consciousness.

The first stage of sense-certainty should conform to the mandate that phenomenology begin with nothing more than the minimal configuration of the opposition of consciousness. This is all that should be at hand if we are going to engage in a pure observation that allows the phenomenon of foundational knowing to examine itself and develop without our importing any content into it. We have, then, the minimal shape of consciousness or presuppositional knowing, where knowing confronts its object as something given without further qualification, relating to it in an immediate fashion.

Nonetheless, because the phenomenon of foundational knowing is a polar relation with distinct sides, these must be determinate. If they were completely indeterminate, they would be indistinguishable. Then the opposition of consciousness would collapse and we would have nothing to observe. That is the predicament of logic, which has being or indeterminacy as its starting point. Here, at the outset of phenomenology, we have a determinate relation and its determinate character is exhibited in how we find ourselves observing a shape of consciousness characterized as sense-certainty, which confronts a sensible manifold, attending to its manifold givenness only in respect to its being or presence for consciousness.

Although consciousness relates to this given manifold in an immediate fashion, this does not mean that consciousness is just that one immediate relationship. One need not worry about the fact that Hegel's observation of sense-certainty is going to allude to matters that obviously involve mediation, such as language, as well as descriptions of the "I" subsisting in time and space and changing its viewpoint. If we were to focus strictly on consciousness's immediate relation to what is without further qualification, it might appear that we have so impoverished a shape that nothing can be said about it except that it is an immediate relation to the immediate given. Instead, we have sense-certainty, a determinate standpoint that confronts a manifold content in an immediate fashion. By relating to what is immediately

given without engaging in any mediating activity, sense-certainty does not discriminate anything. It does not pick out anything in distinction from other things. It does not point out something in terms of something else. It does not describe or explain what it confronts in any way. As immediate, sense-certainty is just a sheer pointing, a sheer indicating, a sheer referring to what is given.

On the other hand, because the given is taken in without any screening, interpretation, or other mediating modification, sense-certainty could appear to be, as Hegel notes, the richest, most truthful cognition of all.<sup>1</sup> Sense-certainty takes in its object as a whole without peeling away, without discriminating any part of its content. Sense-certainty does not focus on any one part at the expense of any other. It does not seek out the essential as opposed to the unessential, or what has some primacy over something else, or what we uncover by discarding the chaff. No, sense-certainty attends to all that is immediately given without removing anything. Indeed, sense-certainty is in this respect the richest of apprehensions.

By the same token, sense-certainty seems to be the truest cognition. Simply taking in the given in its immediate presence, sense-certain consciousness does not do anything that would alter or cover over its object. Sense-certainty does not engage in any interpretation of the given, which would impose consciousness's own viewpoint upon it. It just confronts the given without interpretation, without any effort at description or explanation, and for precisely this reason, sense-certainty seems to be the most authentic, the most objective, the most true type of knowing.

As Hegel observes, however, sense-certainty proves to be the most impoverished and abstract cognition.<sup>2</sup> Because sense certain consciousness apprehends what it confronts solely in regard to its being, it does not know the object in any other respect. Consciousness here senses what is, but otherwise knows not what it opposes.

Hegel introduces the term "this" as a way of speaking about how the object of sense-certainty is construed.<sup>3</sup> The given manifold figures merely as a "this" and the "I" that addresses the "this" is itself a "this." Since sense-certainty engages in no mediating activity, it is just as immediate as its object. It is not a knowing that is qualified in any particular manner, be it by some relation to anything outside itself or by some mediation performed by its own activity. Likewise the object is not ascribed any character dependent upon its relation to anything else or upon any internal differentiations.

None of that is in play, so, in this regard, Hegel is willing to speak of the object as just being "this" and the knower as just being "this knower," without further qualification. The employment of "this" is an appropriate way of characterizing the two poles of sense-certainty in several respects. It provides an indicative reference that points at its subject matter without giving it any determinate character. It offers no descriptions to mediate what the object is.

Rather than determining the being of the object or the subject with regard to any other factor, it simply takes them in as immediate. “This” object is simply pointed to by “this” knowing, a standpoint as otherwise undistinguished as the given it confronts.

With this absence of mediation, the object as it appears for knowing, Hegel observes in paragraph 91, is something that is simply because it is. The object is not present as something grounded in some other factor or determined by some cause or reason. Lacking mediation, the object is taken in in its sheer givenness. The “I” is equally present in a purely immediate fashion. We have just the individual “I” confronting the bare individual object. Hegel offers both poles as sheer singular factors because any ascription of universality would mediate the individual. Instead of just being, the object and subject would be assigned determinate features, class memberships, or species and genera. The immediate given is taken as a sheer individual because nothing universal mediates its presence.

Yet, as Hegel tells us in paragraph 92, actual sense-certainty does not have just this pure immediacy. It is an *example* of immediate reference to being, which is why when we reflect on what is exhibited here and talk about there being an immediate object and an immediate reference to the object, we employ concepts. In so doing, we speak of the “this” as an example of the immediate given and we speak of the individual “I” as an example of the knower who confronts an object with respect to its being. We can do so, because on both sides there is something universal. The “this” that sense-certainty confronts is immediately given like any “this,” just as the “I” opposing it does so like any “I” that is sense-certain.

Although the “this” that is confronted is a singular factor, “this” cannot just be this singular factor. “This” could be any singular factor, just as the “this consciousness” is an example of any “this consciousness,” any individual consciousness aware in such a manner. Hegel points out that if *we* reflect on what we have before us, *we* see that both factors are mediated.<sup>4</sup> We, as phenomenological observers, are not confronting the object but observing knowing and its relationship to its object. The mere fact that we are dealing with *relata* indicates that we have factors that in some respect are mediated by their relation to one another. The object is not just a “this,” but something in relation to knowing, whereas the knowing is not just “this” I, but one in relation to its object.

These mediations do not directly appear to the consciousness under observation, which takes the immediate given to be what is true. In so doing, sense-certainty exhibits an asymmetry that is basic to the structure of consciousness. Namely, the object is related to as something given in its own right, as something that is what it is independently of knowing’s relation to it. Knowing, on the other hand, only is knowing by relating itself to the object.

In this way, sense-certainty confronts what is immediately as the standard of truth against which it must measure its knowledge claim.

We now must observe what happens when sense-certainty, the immediate knowing of what is immediate, attempts to validate its knowledge. Hegel presents this as a matter of observing what occurs when consciousness engages in immediate reference to what is given, to the "this." To refer to something as "this" is to take it in its sheer givenness without bringing in any other factor to determine it or to secure reference to it. Sense-certainty's reference to "this" does not rely upon any kind of interpretive act or any kind of description or any mediation. It simply takes the object in its givenness, pointing to it as just "this."

Consciousness's pointing to the "this" is, however, from the start something that is done in any kind of pointing. This is because the immediate pointing to the immediate given cannot pick out in any determinate way what it is indicating. Any immediate reference points to a "this" without providing any resource for distinguishing the "this" in question from any other.

Insofar as "this" can refer to any singular factor, the "this" ends up being indifferent to what it points out. Any given can be pointed to immediately as a "this." The "this" thereby remains the same no matter what factor it picks out. In each case, "this" remains a pointing that is indifferent to any determination of the object to which it refers. This indifference is exhibited precisely by how "this" can be employed to refer immediately to any object.

Although the process of immediate reference presents itself in the application of "this" to the given, Hegel describes the process of sense certainty in terms of "here" and "now," invoking immediate spatial and temporal references.<sup>5</sup> These involve what are acknowledged to be the two forms of intuition, space and time. Yet, as we saw earlier, Hegel notes in his own systematic account of mind that the apprehension of space and time does not fall within consciousness proper. Rather, the forms of intuition fall within intelligence, where mind relates to its own determinations as both subjective and objective.<sup>6</sup>

This point need not disqualify Hegel's employment of "here" and "now" in his phenomenological account of sense-certainty since the latter does not deal with systematic questions of the philosophy of mind. The phenomenon of sense-certainty can involve reference to the "here" and "now" just as the immediate being of the object can comprise a sensible manifold. "Here" and "now" do the job of the "this," for they both provide a way of immediately relating to the given. Like any pointing to a "this," reference to what is here and now does not ascribe any further feature to the object. Pointing to something as "here" or "now" leaves completely open what it is.

Nonetheless, the "now" is immediately something that has further determinations, for the given is a concrete sensible manifold. For this reason, the

“now” is just as soon something else. What is “now” may be day, but what is “now” becomes night, which becomes morning and so forth.

By being indifferently day or night, the “now” shows how the immediate reference it provides renders every “now” an instance of an abiding, continually reen countered factor. The “now” is supposed to refer to something simply immediate, a singular sensation. Yet the “now” turns out to be something universal, not just individual. It does so by containing an element of negation. Although the “now” is always some singular given, it is just as much indifferent to the singular given it is now, and it shows this indifference through the supplanting or negating of this “now” by something else. “Now” applies to both equally indifferently and its negative relation to every instance of itself gives it an abiding identity of its own. This abiding identity is what sense-certainty ends up confronting by attempting to confront what is given in terms of immediate reference to what is “now.” The “now” that subsists consists in the presence and immediate overcoming of the presence of immediate givens. It is a whole that has as its elements the immediate given and the removal of what that contains.

If this abiding “now” is to be called a universal, it is important to recognize that it is a specific kind of universal. The instances that fall under the “now” may be different and individual, but their being “now” does not itself determine anything about their diversity. That they *are* “now” is something completely indifferent to *what* they are. Consequently the universality of the “now” in no way specifies the particular in the manner in which a genus might necessarily specify its species. The “now’s” universality is a very abstract universality, which in no way determines the factors that it unites.

For just this reason, what is “now” is simply something given without any further necessary qualifications. Any given can be “now.” Such givenness, that is devoid of any necessary particularity, is just sensuous, a manifold given in all its singularity, without being further qualified, mediated, or distinguished by any universal properties. This is also true, as Hegel points out, with the “this.” Any singular factor is “this.” So by trying to get at the given immediately, without any description or explanation, we end up confronting something that unites all the singular givens that are indifferently subsumed under it in the way in which the “this” is a universal that can apply to anything.

This encounter with universality does not depend upon language. Just sticking out a finger to indicate something immediate meets the same failure to seize upon something merely singular as using the word, “this.” Mere pointing is just as incapable of picking out anything singular, for nothing intrinsically directs that immediate reference to any particular given. Unless some explanation or description is added, the finger is just a bare indication, to which any number of objects might be associated.



The problem is most evident, as Hegel points out, when we use language, whose terms are themselves universal. If we attempt to know immediately what is immediate by employing words, we betray our endeavor in precisely the same way that sense certainty here does. We end up saying something that is not what we mean, for we mean to indicate the individual but we express something universal. To speak of “this” is to say something that applies indifferently to any given that is pointed out. One means to lay hold of a singular given, but one states something that applies commonly to them all.

What holds true of “this” and “now” applies equally to “here” as a means of singular reference. What is given “here” can be a tree, a house, or anything else that might occupy some location. Identifying some given as being “here” may be an attempt to get at it without any mediation, without any description or interpretation, but the “here” turns out to be a universal that unites givens that have no intrinsic relation to one another. They are all equally susceptible to being pointed to as “here” simply to the extent that they are immediately present.

Hegel presents these moves as the experience sense-certainty undergoes in relating immediately to what it takes to be a given and immediate. What consciousness here takes as the object turns out not to be what consciousness thought it was. Nonetheless, Hegel does not yet present us with an inversion of consciousness, where the poles of phenomenal knowing take a completely different form. Instead, Hegel describes a reversal within sense-certainty.

This reversal, observed in paragraph 100, is one in which the object that sense-certainty took to be the essential now becomes unessential. The object has become unessential insofar as it has proved to be universal instead of the immediate individual it was supposed to be. Knowing, the relation to the object, was presumed to be something dependent on the givenness of the object, since without something to relate to, there is no cognition. Now, however, the universality that the object has come to exhibit has turned out to lie in the activity of knowing, an activity in which the “this” or the “here” and “now” have been found to apply to a plurality of givens.

So, we now find the knowing under observation turning to the subject, the “I,” in an attempt to know what is immediate and not abandon the effort that characterizes sense-certainty. Consciousness has not found the immediate in the object, which has turned out to be universal. This leaves one remaining resource at its disposal to lay hold of the object as immediately given, namely, consciousness’s own relationship to its object.

What follows is an examination of how the knowing in question seeks to know the object as immediate by relying upon the immediacy of the “I.” Sense-certainty has found itself unable to know what is immediate by pointing to the given as a “this,” as what is “here,” or what is “now.” These manoeuvres left it confronting something universal, rather than the immedi-

ate given that it is seeking to apprehend. Can consciousness, however, succeed in getting at what is in its immediacy by turning back on itself and focusing upon the "I"?

Consciousness has no other available avenue than relying upon its own individual "I," its individual immediate referring as a means for securing immediate reference. Consciousness will try to know what is immediate by getting at what is for it insofar as the "I" is sensing it. In other words, the attempt to know the object in its truth, to know what is immediately given, is going to depend upon the immediacy of the "I," rather than the this-ness or the here-ness or the now-ness of the given, which left consciousness with something universal rather than singular and immediate.

In paragraphs 100, 101, and 102, Hegel follows out how the "I" takes on the burden of securing reference to what is immediately given. Can the "this" that is being pointed to by the "I" be captured in its singularity due to the presence of the immediate consciousness that confronts it? Does the "I" that immediately refers to what is provide a sufficient anchor to lay hold of the object without description or interpretation? Does the relation to the "I" not fix the "here" and "now" so that they are no longer just any "here" and "now" but a unique "here" and "now"? Does the presence of the "I" not render the "this" unambiguously *my* "this" without reliance upon any descriptive, qualifying terms? Does not *my* hearing, *my* seeing, *my* touching not make sense-certainty a truthful grasp of what is in its immediacy? My cognition seems to allow what is "this" to be a unique object, just as "now" can truthfully be daytime because I am the one confronting what is now, just as "here" is a tree because I am referring to what is present.

Yet, if "I" am just "I," just an immediate standpoint without further qualification, how can my sense-certainty be distinguished from that of any other consciousness? The "I," as merely "this I," is no less incipiently universal than "this object" or "here" and "now." There is nothing about "I" that refers to something unique to any subject. Rather, every consciousness is just as much an "I" as I am. My sensing as merely "mine" is therefore indistinguishable from that of any other subject. The "indexical" reference to the "I" ends up being a fruitless maneuver.

Indeed, even if the "I" in question were unique, it can be confronting different "here's" and different "now's." The very same "I" that "here" sees a tree can "here" see a house. So long as the "I" is just an indeterminate immediate standpoint and "here" and "now" are devoid of further mediating qualification, the "I" remains indifferent to the objects to which it is associated, leaving it once more as universal a factor as the indicative pointers it is supposed to supplant. The "I" of one and the same individual cannot itself provide a sufficient individuation of the object because the "I" becomes a complex of referrals, just as the "now" becomes a complex of "now's." Once more, the factor by which reference is to be secured proves to be

indifferent to the multiplicity of singular objects that fall successively under its sway.

If we now look back at the two poles of sense-certainty, we find that neither the object as it is immediately sensed in its this-ness, in its here-ness, in its now-ness, nor the “I” as an immediate apprehension provides sufficient resources for laying hold of anything singular. On both sides a movement occurs, a movement in which what is putatively individual is discovered to be something universal. Consciousness ends up confronting a “now” that contains a plurality of “now’s” or a “here” that contains a plurality of “here’s,” just as its own “I” is just as much a complex of “I’s.”

These moves might appear to signal the concluding impasse of sense-certainty, exhausting all available options for validating its knowledge of the being of its object. Nevertheless, Hegel offers one last stage in the development, which is introduced in paragraph 103. Hegel prefaces this final engagement by observing that sense-certainty has experienced that its essence, what it takes to be true—namely, the immediate—is not in the object or in the “I.”<sup>7</sup> Immediacy cannot be found in either because both turn out to be universal. As much as consciousness may attempt to know its object as “this” or “here” or “now” or what “I” sense, it cannot express therein what it means to confront.

As Hegel observes, there is still one last gambit left and that is for sense-certainty to take the entirety of its relationship as the anchor of its knowledge.<sup>8</sup> That is, consciousness must try to get at its truth by dealing not just with the givenness of its object, nor just with the givenness of its own relating as the “I,” but to do both at once. “I,” this “I,” apprehends that the “here” and “now” is “this” object. The “I” will fix itself on the “here” and “now” and together they will secure reference to what is immediately given.

Does their combination prevent the “now” from being something that was instead of what is, night instead of day? Does it prevent the “here” from turning out to be something other than what it is initially taken to be, a tree rather than a house? Even if all these factors are employed together, they still have an abstract, indifferent character that renders them once more universal elements. The “here” and “now” sensed by “me” is still prey to endless substitution. After all, everything of which I am sense-certain is sensed by “me,” “here,” and “now.” Accordingly, what “I” apprehend “here” and “now” is, as such, something universal, with the kind of universality that is indifferent to what exemplifies it.

In traversing these three successive options, consciousness does not obtain any new shapes. Rather, each one is a ploy using the same resources, the same structures to get at what sense-certainty takes to be the truth—namely, the immediate, the given, insofar as it just is.

Once all three gambits have been played out, sense-certain consciousness must admit that its object is universal and that its manner of relating to it is

equally universal. Having exhausted all available options, given its initial structure as sense-certainty, consciousness must face up to the new character its object has been shown to have in truth, as well as to how its own activity is not just a direct taking in of the given, but a mediating movement.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 91, p. 58.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 91, p. 58.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 91, p. 58.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 92, p. 59.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 95, p. 60.
6. Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, para. 418, p. 159.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 103, p. 62.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 103, p. 62.

## Lecture 3

# Perception

We have arrived at a new shape of consciousness through the self-examination of sense-certainty. Before observing that new shape in action, Hegel notes the astonishing fact that there are thinkers who maintain that sense-certainty does not undermine itself, but is rather an unassailable position revealing the ultimate truth that what genuinely is is the immediate, the given, the sensuous.<sup>1</sup> Kant cannot be among these enthusiasts of sense-certainty, for Kant recognized that sensation by itself is not sufficient to establish objective reference. Sense-certainty cannot establish objectivity, for, as Kant would argue, nothing can confront consciousness as an object unless it involves sensuous intuitions that are given a conceptually determined unity distinguishable from merely subjective association. Sensation by itself does not provide that.

The position that absolutizes sense-certainty, maintaining that what truly is is immediate sensuous reality devoid of universality, is tantamount to a full-fledged nominalism, affirming that there can be nothing objective about anything universal. Nietzsche speaks in these terms in the *Twilight of the Idols*, where he privileges sensuous being against the empty universal ghosts of philosophical speculation.<sup>2</sup>

Hegel suggests that our observation of sense-certainty shows how such a position is self-refuting. One should keep in mind that the observation of sense-certainty, like that of any shape of consciousness, bears not upon things as such, but upon the prospects of analogous positions that operate within the opposition of consciousness. The experience of sense-certainty thus does not preclude that what is is sensuous or singular. It rather provides an immanent critique of the knowing that takes the object it confronts as having the character of immediate being.

Some might question the coherence of that critique given Hegel's admission that we have to do the talking for sense-certainty because sense-certainty cannot really make use of language, which mediates things with universals. We should recognize, however, that here we are not observing a psychological phenomenon. Rather, we are following an epistemological project attempting to validate its knowing. That project operates with the preunderstanding of knowing that more or less reigns in modern times and has come to be thought natural. It takes for granted that knowing always confronts something given, that knowing has a foundation, that knowing is presuppositional, that there is a distinction between knowing and its object. That epistemological project is what is here under observation as it attempts to legitimate itself. We are not engaging in an actual psychological investigation of consciousness in a particular form. If one focused on sense-certainty as a psychological shape, one might consider it to be a psychological process given apart from perception, understanding, conceptualization, linguistic intelligence, and the like. But when one deals with sense-certainty as an epistemological project that is being observed as it attempts to legitimate itself, there is no need to worry about such systematic psychological issues and the exclusion of linguistic intelligence.

Sense-certainty has presented presuppositional, foundational knowing in its most minimal state, where consciousness confronts its object as given with nothing else ascribed to it. That initial form of phenomenal knowing has given rise to a consciousness of something that is universal, containing a plurality of sensuous givens to which it is indifferent, just as the "this," the "here," the "now," and the "I" have all been shown to do. This new opposition comprises the starting point of the next shape, which Hegel identifies as "perception."

Perception is the second of the three shapes that fall under the heading of "Consciousness," following that of "sense-certainty" and preceding that of "understanding." In distinguishing the shape of perception from that of understanding, Hegel will emphasize that the object of perception counts as a universal of a specific kind. Hegel identifies the universal of perception in two respects: as a sensuous universal and as a conditioned universal.

The two characterizations go together. The universal object of perception is a sensuous universal in that its particularizations consist in the manifold material provided by sense-certainty. These sense contents are what figure within the universal as its particular instances. On the other hand, the universal of perception is a conditioned universal because it unites a content that is given rather than being generated by the commonality that runs through it. The universal that consciousness perceives is thus relative to the sensuous givens it connects.

By contrast, Hegel will characterize the object of understanding as involving an unconditioned universal that proves to be "supersensible." In

observing perception and understanding, one of the defining challenges will be to comprehend the difference between these two types of universality: the conditioned sensible universal of perception and the unconditioned supersensible universal of understanding.

Hegel begins his observation of the shape of consciousness of perception by characterizing its object as it appears to have arisen from the self-examination of sense-certainty. Sense-certainty, Hegel reminds us, failed to validate its certainty because its truth turned out to be universal. Perception is going to take what has emerged as the truth of self-certainty as its object. Perception will therefore confront the given as something it takes to be universal.<sup>3</sup>

The whole shape of perception is defined by the kind of universal that has arisen from sense-certainty. This type of universality will apply to both sides of the opposition of perceiving consciousness. Both the “I” and the object are going to operate as universals, just as they have proven to be in the self-examination of sense-certainty. It should be no surprise that perception will involve a transformation of both poles. In the introduction, Hegel pointed out that the inversions of consciousness alter both sides of the opposition of consciousness because once the object is transformed, so is knowing’s relation to it. That is, to have as an object the immediate given, knowing is going to have to confront it immediately, but to confront the object as a universal, knowing has to operate with the same movement that its object exhibits. What is different about the opposition of consciousness of perception is that now, as Hegel notes, the principle that is exhibited in the poles of knowing is something necessary, which was not the case with sense-certainty.<sup>4</sup> This point harks back to something that Hegel pointed out in the introduction in describing the character of this whole discourse. There Hegel noted that even if phenomenology is something that, at best, may provide access to science proper, phenomenology still has a scientific character of its own.<sup>5</sup> Phenomenology may start with something that is taken up merely as a phenomenon, but once the opposition of consciousness is stipulated, what follows from its minimal configuration is generated from an internal necessity. That is, the subsequent shape emerges in virtue of the content of the starting point that is taken for granted. Once that assumption of foundational knowing is made, nothing else follows arbitrarily. All further content will be generated by the workings of the assumed subject matter, workings that consist in the self-examination by each shape of consciousness of its own knowledge claims. With perception we have the first example of that necessary development. Here we have come to a shape of knowing that is not just stipulated, but has rather emerged necessarily from the inversion that the stipulated starting point has undergone.

Hegel begins his observation of perception in a way that might appear somewhat mysterious. He first notes how the object of perception and the

form of knowing—namely, perceiving—both exhibit the same principle—universality. He then observes that the knowing of perceiving presents the movement of universality in the unfolding differentiation of its aspects, whereas the object of perception presents the same movement as drawn together. It might appear that both sides comprise examples of the same principle, which is their common essence. Hegel, however, notes that, for consciousness, the object is the essential and knowing is the unessential. These two aspects are opposed and once again, as is generic to consciousness, the object is regarded as having an independence of its own enabling it to be the standard of truth, that which provides the criterion by which its knowing is to be measured.<sup>6</sup>

How then does perception work itself out? What happens now that consciousness takes its object to be the universal? Once again, we encounter a threefold development of the shape, which largely seems to follow the ordering of sense-certainty's self-examination.

Sense-certainty began by focusing on the given as given, addressing its this-ness and here-ness and now-ness. Then, sense-certain consciousness turned to examine how the manner by which knowing relates to the given determines its true character, referring to the immediacy of the "I" as an anchor for immediate reference. Finally, sense-certainty attempted to work with both sides together and see if their combination could provide the true grasp that had so far proven elusive.

Something similar occurs here in perception. In the first section of perception, which extends from paragraph 111 through paragraph 117, we observe perception confronting the object as it exhibits the singular features of the kind of universality that has emerged out of sense-certainty. The resulting difficulty in laying hold of the object as universal then leads to a shift in approach where consciousness turns to the activity of the "I" to secure knowledge of its object. This second discussion, which takes place in paragraphs 118 through 122, focuses on the role of the subject and contrasting what the subject is doing with what the object genuinely is. Thirdly, there is a final maneuver, extending from paragraphs 123 through 131, in which perception combines the two initial approaches to capture its prey.

First, let us consider what transpires in the first section, where we observe consciousness confronting its object as it has emerged from the experience of sense-certainty. The object is no longer spoken of as just a "this" that is "here" or "now." These terms cannot capture what has emerged. To specify the object in a way appropriate to its new universality, Hegel instead characterizes what is given for perception as a thing with properties.

Anyone who has read John Locke, or any of the other classical empiricists, will recognize this characterization, which fits very much what they envisage in describing the point of view of ordinary "experience." As we shall see, the epistemological puzzles with which the classical empiricists



grappled closely fit what here emerge as endemic to the shape of consciousness under observation.

The crux of their problems and those of perception as a shape of consciousness is that the object, taken as a sensuous and conditioned universal, as a thing with properties, has a unity that is completely indifferent to what fills it, namely the particular sense contents that provide it with its determination. These particulars are given or, shall we say, immediately sensed. They are sensuous givens, but unlike the sensuous manifold of sense-certainty, they are mediated by something to which they belong. Nonetheless, the unity to which they belong is such that it unites them in a way that is completely indifferent to their diverse character. Insofar as they are united in a way that is completely indifferent to their particular identity, they themselves have nothing about them that intrinsically connects them to one another or that intrinsically repels them from one another, making it impossible for them to be drawn together. The particular sensuous contents are completely indifferent to one another and are completely indifferent to being grouped together in the way in which they are held together by the universal.

On the one hand, we have the thing-hood of the object, comprising the way in which the thing possesses its properties. This thing-hood has its properties such that they are indifferent to its unity. The unity of the thing does not determine its properties in their specific difference. They are both indifferent to their unity and indifferent to one another. Because of that these properties are not unique to any one thing. They can each belong to an indefinite plurality of things.

This might seem to render them sensuous universals in their own right, but it is important to distinguish them from the universality of the thing that possesses them. The properties are indeed sensuous, deriving their content from sensation, but they are not themselves things with properties, uniting a plurality of particulars. Moreover, the indifference of each property to its counterparts and to the thing to which it belongs does not mean that each property is an instance possessed by a plurality of things, all of which have that same sensuous content. Each property may still be singular, even if not bound to any thing in particular. Nonetheless, given the plurality of senses, each property will be of a kind, for example, a color, a sound, a smell, a touch, and so on.

Nonetheless, the focus of perception is upon *the* thing with properties, rather than relations between things, which may or may not share properties in common. Here the relation between properties is of key importance. As Hegel observes, the properties themselves, in belonging to the thing, do not in any way disturb or react to one another.<sup>7</sup> They do not exclude one another, such that a property can only belong to a part of the thing to which no other property belongs. Instead, the properties interpenetrate one another in belonging to the thing. For example, the thing has a color, a certain taste, and a

certain tactile character without any of these properties getting in the way of one another. They are coincident and coextensive. This is because they are related to the thing in a manner that does not intrude upon the relation of any other property to that thing. The indifference of the thing to what properties belong to it leaves them in a nonexclusive relation to one another.

By the same token, their defining relation to the thing excludes any discrimination between essential and unessential features. Since no property is necessarily bound up with the thing, every property is equally expendable. None has any special claim to the thing or any power to exclude any other property from belonging to the thing.

Given these characteristics of the properties in relation to the thing and to one another, the unity of the thing becomes a daunting problem. The thing has no other identity than being that to which its properties belong. What then can connect the properties, which otherwise are indifferent to one another and to the thing to which they belong? This is the issue with which Locke notoriously grappled. The thing has no further character than being the substrate of its properties, being that which has them, but there is nothing about the thing's ownership of its properties that has any determinate connection to their own specific character. Yet, as properties, they belong to the thing in the way that involves this kind of indifference, which comprises a sensuous, conditioned universality. That is, the commonality that connects them together rests on nothing more than their own sensuous givenness. There is no other factor to be found that draws them together. The thing-hood is that which draws them together, but it does not have any further determination than being that which has them. How then is consciousness to know the thing in that capacity?

In observing consciousness's attempt to perceive the thing and its properties, Hegel speaks about oneness or the one, and in this connection, about self-relation or what he calls "being-for-self." Self-relation and the one go together, for one is the one and only insofar as it relates just to itself and excludes all reference to other. To be the one is to be solely in relation to oneself, having eliminated relation to anything else.

In a certain respect, the thing is a one for the thing is a unity that is characterized by its relation to its properties and not in respect to its relationship to any other things. The thing is a sensuous conditioned universal in virtue of how it indifferently possesses its sensuously given properties. Still, how is the thing one in this very respect?

Hegel raises this issue in connection to the problem of how a thing can have a determinate unity. To be one, a thing has to be something exclusive, something that does not belong to anything else. As Hegel notes in paragraph 113, insofar as the thing has a plurality of properties, which permeate each other with a kind of indifference, the thing comprises the medium in which they are to be found. As such, the thing is itself a wholly abstract medium

that contains its properties in a completely passive way. There is nothing about the thing as their underlying medium that leaves any mark upon them or their content. It just has them. It is, in that regard, simply an ensemble of properties.

Accordingly, as Hegel further notes in paragraph 114, the thing has one sensuous property and *also* another sensuous property and *also* indefinitely others. This relation of “also” exemplifies the immediate way in which these sensuous contents are present. There is nothing more to be said about how one gets from one to the other. They are just there, enclosed together in this medium in a completely external manner.

Yet then, as Hegel observes in paragraph 114, there is another side to the thing that has to be kept in mind. Insofar as the various properties are utterly indifferent to the thing and one another, they are only related to themselves. If the properties in the thing were not indifferent to one another, they would have some determinate relation to one another and their character would manifest this connection. Nothing in their own content, however, joins them together in any fashion. Since they are indifferent to one another, it does not matter in the least what the other properties are. Their specific diversity has no bearing upon them, which is why their unification into one thing is so tenuous.

If one were to bring in properties that do have a determining connection, such as heat and color, one would no longer be dealing with the sensuous conditioned universality of the thing and properties, but with dynamic relationships that involve force and lawful transformations. Such dynamically interrelated features have connections that are mediated by a causal process, whereas here in perception, the properties of the object are immediately given without any causal interaction.

Nonetheless, the properties cannot be only indifferent to one another due to another ingredient feature: their plurality. Insofar as the properties are a plurality, they must have some negative relationship to prevent them from coalescing into one indistinguishable property. They still have to be differentiated from one another. They must in some regard exclude themselves from one another and oppose one another.

This negative relationship must apply on two levels. One is the level of the properties themselves. To be distinct, they must not be what their counterparts are. The same aspect of negation must also apply to the thing itself. After all, the thing cannot coalesce with all other things if it is to remain one thing among others. To be an individual collection of properties, the thing must somehow be distinct from other collections, from other things.

Since the properties that exclude one another need not be connected, they are in fact independent of one another. Consequently, they revert to what Hegel describes as independent materials or matters.<sup>8</sup> Due to their exclusive

oneness, these matters are merely collected together, rather than truly belonging to some thing as properties.

The advent of these matters shows how consciousness, in attempting to perceive its object as a thing with properties, ends up confronting the dissolution of the thing into a plurality of independent matters. As a whole, the thing faces consciousness in both these aspects: on the one hand as the substrate of properties that interpenetrate each other without excluding one another from their relationship to the thing; and on the other hand, as a collection of independent matters.

Hegel observes that these diverging aspects present perceiving consciousness with the possibility of deception.<sup>9</sup> Consciousness faces an uncertainty concerning where the thing begins and ends. Insofar as the unity of the object is no sooner at hand than it is prey to dissolution, consciousness cannot be secure in its knowledge of the thing it confronts. Do the sensuous properties really belong to this thing and not another and are they independent matters that are only collected together by consciousness without actually belonging to any underlying substrate? Can consciousness ever be sure that it is not deceiving itself in trying to perceive the thing, given how its object is construed?

Moreover, if perceiving consciousness allows the thing to be dissolved into independent, sensuous matters, these become problematic. No longer belonging to a thing, these sensuous matters do not have any determinate relationship to anything else, nor do they themselves possess properties of their own. If they did they would be things and not matters. Hegel describes what consciousness is left with in confronting these matters in paragraph 117. The thing, as the universal medium of these matters, has nothing to show for itself, leaving just a collection of such sensuous materials, which have no determinate connection to one another. They no longer are determinate properties, nor do they even comprise determinate beings.

The matters are not properties because they lack the relation of belonging to a thing. They are also not determinate beings because they have no contrastive relation to other, but simply stand on their own.

These moves are all anticipated in Locke's account of perception. He begins describing perception as an awareness of simple ideas, which themselves are simple and undifferentiated. They are not themselves things with properties. They are just immediate sensuous factors, otherwise not further determined. We just find them together in experience in some kind of contiguous grouping. On the basis of that happenstance, we perceive them to belong together to something. Yet what is that something to which they belong? It is simply the thing that has them and it is perceivable in terms of nothing other than the fact that we encounter together some simple ideas. The contingency of this encounter leads Locke to impute to the thing some grounding power or force to keep its properties together, leading him beyond the simple

perception of a thing and its properties to the threshold of the understanding of dynamic relations of force and law. Without taking that move, consciousness has no way of securing the unity of its object.<sup>10</sup>

At the point where perceiving consciousness discovers the thing to revert to a collection of matters, these matters themselves cease to be properties without obtaining any other means of sustaining any mediated determinacy. As a consequence, perception has reverted to a certain extent to sense-certainty, where consciousness confronts in the sensuous matters an immediately given object.

Hegel describes this in paragraph 114, observing that with the thing dissolving into sensuous matters, consciousness has withdrawn from perceiving things and returned into itself to an awareness of the sensuous given. Yet, as Hegel notes, the consciousness of sensuous being passes back over into perception. As sense-certainty has shown, the attempt to know what is merely sensuous ends up knowing something that involves universality. So consciousness cannot just revert to sense-certainty. Rather, it must take another shot at perception, informed by its initial failure to know the thing and its properties.

This entails a second development, which Hegel begins observing in paragraph 118. This development involves two alternate paths, where the perceiver is going to regard one of the conflicting construals of its object as due to the act of perception. Recognizing this will allow the perceiver to regard the latter construal as a subjective deception and to affirm the other construal of its object as true. Just as sense-certainty turned to the sensing "I" to secure immediate reference, so here perception turns to the perceiving "I" in order to resolve the dilemma it fell into in trying to capture the thing and its properties.

In face of the competing construals of the object as a thing with properties and as a collection of sensuous matters, consciousness now pursues the strategy of viewing one or the other as being at hand because of what the act of perception does rather than being something inhering in the object itself. In each case, perception distinguishes its apprehension of the truth from the untruth its own act of perceiving generates. The two sides with which perceiving consciousness contends are the object with respect to its unity, as a thing with properties, and the diversity residing in its properties, which revert to sensuous matters. The abiding problem perception faces is that of getting the unity and diversity to fit together. Since the unity lacks any internal process of differentiation and the diversity is devoid of an intrinsic connection, all that seems doable is to deny the objectivity of one side or the other and thereby uphold the objectivity of its counterpart.

In this way, perception now attempts to retain the truth of the object by showing that one of the conflicting sides inheres in the act of perception, not in the object itself. In paragraph 119 we observe one such play at work.

Consciousness attempts to know the object as one but the unity of the thing seems at odds with its properties, which do not exhibit any connection to the thing. Perception will now attempt to resolve this problem by allowing the thing to retain a true unity by focusing upon how the act of perception is responsible for the diversity that challenges that unity. This involves a shift analogous to that which occurred in sense-certainty when consciousness, having failed to lay hold of its object in terms of its this-ness, here-ness, and now-ness, turned to the immediacy of the I to fix the reference to its object. Here, perception tries to redeem the unity of the object as universal by imputing to itself the diversity of the properties. In other words, the diverse sensuous properties of the object are not in the thing itself, but products of the diverse faculties of sense of the perceiver. The thing is not itself red and bitter and warm, but it is our vision and taste and sense of temperature that gives it these properties. The disruption of the unity of the object is our doing, not something happening in truth. Perceiving consciousness thus seems able to lay hold of the object as at one with itself, as retaining an unimpeached universality, by now taking the disruptive diversity of its properties as something that falls on the perceiving subject, deriving from how it perceives. This manner is recognized to be deceptive and merely subjective, producing contents that do not determine how the thing is in itself, but only reflect how the perceiving consciousness takes it in. On this account, the perceiving consciousness, rather than the thing, is the universal medium in which the diverse properties are had. Presumably, this allows perception to maintain the unity and truth of the thing as a one.

Yet, as Hegel points out in paragraph 120, this rescue mission hardly resolves the problem. By removing the properties from the thing itself and placing them in the subjective act of perception, this maneuver leaves the thing devoid of any differentiated content. The thing becomes completely empty. So, in this respect, the rescue mission is not going to work. The object has to be determined in its own right and that means that it has to have determination and determination that excludes what it is not in some respect. The act of perception cannot be the source of all its specificity. The determinate properties of the thing cannot just belong to the faculties of perception. They cannot be withdrawn from the object. Hence, there really is no way of stopping the thing from being a medium of these properties, of being something that has this as well as that property.

Perceiving consciousness must therefore find another remedy that does not involve depriving the thing of its properties. Given the abiding indifference of them, perceiving consciousness has no choice but to try to uphold the diversity of the properties by ascribing their unity to the act of perception. Hegel begins observing this undertaking in paragraph 121. Perceiving consciousness has experienced that it cannot forgo diverse properties, so now it must sacrifice the unity of the thing by trying to know that unity as some-

thing subjective, something dwelling within the relation of perception to its object. Thus, as Hegel notes, perceiving consciousness has to take upon itself the unity of the thing. The different independent properties, without which there is nothing determinate to know, are now perceived to exist together only by belonging to the same perceiving consciousness. Here Hegel speaks of the “insofar” and the “also” to describe the connecting bond that consciousness imposes upon the independent sensuous matters to give them a unity that cannot be found in their own contents. Consciousness perceives its object to have one property insofar as it has or does not have another, or to have one property and also another. In each case, the unity of properties is understood as not being objective but as being consciousness’s own contribution. Perceiving consciousness is the one that unifies these diverse sensuous contents, allowing them to retain their specific determination instead of reverting to independent matters that lose their own determinacy. Hegel writes of how “positing these properties as a oneness is the work of consciousness alone which, therefore, has to prevent them from collapsing into oneness in the Thing.”<sup>11</sup> That is, if consciousness is to perceive its object as involving independent matters that are indifferently given, it can only maintain their separateness from one another by locating their unity in the act of perception. So, Hegel writes, “to this end,” consciousness “brings in the ‘insofar’, in this way preserving the properties as mutually external, and the Thing as the Also.”<sup>12</sup> By employing the “insofar,” perceiving consciousness operates as the medium of all the distinct properties, preventing their separate independent being from being obstructed by the unity of the thing. This allows them to have their specific character without that being undermined by having to fit within an objective oneness.

This then, is the second alternative to which perceiving consciousness drives itself in face of the challenge of knowing an object that presents a sensuous, conditioned universal, which unifies factors that resist unification. Consciousness has tried to perceive the object as containing both unity and diversity but it could not put it all together. The thing and its properties could not sustain itself, but breaks down. Consciousness has then tried to uphold the truth of one side by making the act of perceiving responsible for the other. It attempted to know the object as being objectively one by treating the diversity of content that does not fit that oneness as being something due to how our perceiving operates in a purely subjective manner. Consciousness perceives the whiteness, the sweetness, the coldness of the thing because of the constitution of its perceiving. All of these multiple features that lack any intrinsic unity are at hand thanks to the “I” as the common medium of these modes of perception. The diverse sensuous content gets thereby relegated to subjective factors that foster the deception that perception encounters until it realizes their subjective source. Yet, it turns out that what is left to the thing cannot sustain itself as determinately objective. Consciousness needs the

other side, whether it likes it or not. Therefore consciousness takes the other route, regarding the unity of the diverse sensuous contents to be something subjective. The diversity is now going to be the real, objective aspect of experience. Now we need to see whether making perception responsible for the unity can enable the diverse sensuous contents to retain objectivity.

By treating only the independent sensuous matters as objective, perceiving consciousness risks finding itself reverting to sense-certainty, which then ends up returning to perception. The independent matters, which do not belong to any thing, do not possess properties of their own and do not have any relation to one another. They thus lack any resources for retaining any determinate objectivity. They present mere immediacy, but that has proven to be a construal of the object that cannot hold up to scrutiny. Perception therefore must deal with this outcome as a failure of its own engagement. It must seek a remedy by recognizing that it has deceived itself through its own way of relating to its object and take that cognizance as a way of comprehending what is genuinely to be perceived.

In paragraph 122, Hegel reflects on what has transpired. Perception began by addressing its object as a sensuous conditioned universal, as a thing with properties, but found itself unable to lay hold of that object, due to the indifference of the unity and diverse filling of the thing. Consciousness next discovered that it could not retain knowledge of its object by making its own act responsible for one or the other side of the conflicting features of the thing. If consciousness took the diversity upon itself, the unity of the object was empty, whereas if consciousness became the medium of diverse matters, they became immediate sensuous factors, as untrue as the putative object of sense-certainty. Yet, as Hegel observes in paragraph 122, these failures set the stage for a third development that is going to take consciousness beyond perception to understanding. He points out that consciousness has been alternately turning itself as well as its object into each of the conflicting sides that are bound up with the whole undertaking of perception. Just as the thing with properties has reverted to a medium of sensuous matters, so consciousness has made itself into a pure one without multiplicity as well as into a passive medium dissolved into independent sensuous contents deriving from its different senses. Both poles thus turn out to take on these two sides.

The object shows itself in this double manner and consciousness's own apprehending manifests the same diversity and oneness as well.

Hegel observes that this concurrence leads perception to a third and final approach, described in paragraph 123. Perceiving consciousness now construes its object in light of what it has just experienced. Not surprisingly, this construal has two sides. It involves perceiving the thing as being in relation to other things in terms of both its unity and diversity. This is exhibited in respect to how the thing is perceived to be related to other things as one among many and how the thing itself is internally structured in virtue of



being in relation to other things. In this interrelation, the properties of the thing take on a new differentiation, where consciousness perceives the thing to have an essential and an unessential character. Consciousness's attempt to perceive the essential and unessential properties of the thing in function of its relation to other things, however, will prove to be untenable, leading perception to undermine itself.

Hegel notes two general ways in which perception here undermines itself. On the one hand, the essential character of the thing ends up failing to provide what it is supposed to contribute—namely an integral being that is independent of the thing's relation to other things. The essential character of the thing will turn out to reflect the thing's relation to other things instead of providing an intrinsic determination. Consciousness will discover that the thing's relation to other things is determinative of its intrinsic character and that its intrinsic character is to be in relation to other things.

On the other hand, the distinction internal to the thing between its essential and unessential properties will break down and prove to be unsustainable. The basic drift of this collapse rests upon how the differentiation of an essential character depends upon their being an inessential character as well. Consequently, the presence of the inessential character is not something superfluous, but essential. The thing must have inessential as well as essential properties. The distinction between inessential and essential properties thus undermines itself, insofar as the inessential properties are just as necessary as the essential.

This final development of perception has two sides that need to be penetrated, and doing so provides the basis for following the transition to the shape of consciousness of understanding. First, we need to understand how consciousness comes to construe the object of its perception as a thing standing in relation to other things. Second, we need to comprehend how this interaction entails that the thing has properties that are essential and inessential. Moreover, how do both these aspects proceed from what perceiving consciousness has so far experienced? Once these issues are addressed, we can consider how the unraveling of the new distinctions in the object of perception leads to an overcoming of perception in general. Finally, we will need to consider how this gives rise to a third and last shape of consciousness, understanding, which will initially confront an object that is no longer a conditioned, sensuous universality, but an unconditioned, supersensible universality.

Our first task, then, is to observe how this third and final stage of perception arises from that which precedes it. Hegel gives us an account of this development starting in paragraph 123. We must remember that both the act of perceiving and the object perceived have come to exhibit both sides of the characterization of the object as universal. Act and object have alternately become a "one" whose oneness does not entail its differentiation and a diffe-

rentiation that does not bring itself into unity. In each case, the individuals that provide a diverse content for the universal leave it something conditioned insofar as they remain something external to and independent of it.

Due to each side of consciousness taking on both aspects of unity and differentiation, consciousness has now moved beyond its second manner of conducting itself in perceiving, where consciousness took the thing as the self-equal true factor and regarded itself as unequal or alternately took the object as truly differentiated but regarded itself as self-equal. Now consciousness perceives the object to be the entire movement that formerly was divided between the object and consciousness. Whereas the unity and differentiation were separately assigned to consciousness and the object in alternation, the object is now perceived to be both movements. Hegel observes the new construal of the object as follows: "The thing is a One, reflected into itself; it is *for itself*, but it is also *for an other*."<sup>13</sup> He goes on to note that the thing is thereby for itself and for another, "*doubly differentiated*."<sup>14</sup> When Hegel describes the thing as being "for itself" or as being "reflected into itself," he is referred to how the thing is self-related. Something is self-related by removing its entanglement with other things and generally with whatever is extraneous to it. This is one side of the movement that the object now takes on, the movement whereby the thing returns to itself through what is external to it. Such was the movement that separately occurred when the differentiated content of the sensuous matters into which the thing's properties reverted proved unable to retain their own determinacy, becoming immediate sensuous givens that cannot be known to be true.

The other side is that the unity of the object is not able to sustain itself without involving a relationship to something else, something extraneous. Perception has experienced how, without that relation to other, the thing becomes an empty receptacle. The thing required the content of the sensuous manifold, which is not generated by its unity, but is immediately given. Thus perception has come to confront something that is unified, is at one with itself, but this its object cannot help but be in a relationship to something other than itself.

As we noted above, Hegel observes that the thing "*is for itself*, but it is also *for an other*." How do these two aspects go together? How does the fact that the thing is related to an other make it an other with respect to itself? If the thing is related to an other, it is itself an other, the other of the thing to which it stands in relation. Therefore, the thing is not only in relation to something else as well as self-related, but it takes on the character of being an other as well. Since the thing is self-related through its relation to other, the thing relates to itself as an other in being the other of its opposing object.

The object here presents itself in relation to other objects because this relation enables it to exhibit at once both aspects of the object of perception—the unity and the external determinate content that is connected to that

unity. The thing stands as something in its own right in distinction from what it is in relation to, thereby manifesting an intrinsic self-related character as well as an extrinsic other-relatedness. Perception will now be grappling with knowing these two aspects of the thing by distinguishing between those properties of the thing that are essential to it, being bound up with the object in its own right, and those other properties that reflect its relationship to other things and count as inessential.

Can the distinction of essential and inessential properties be perceived to be truly the case or does this distinction end up collapsing? Further, how does the outcome of perceiving the object to be both in relation to other objects and having within itself essential and inessential properties lead consciousness beyond perception to confront an object that has an unconditioned, supersensible universality?

It is helpful to keep in perspective the first two developments that have led perception to the third avenue we are about to observe. First, perception confronted the very outcome of sense-certainty, an object that has turned out to be a universal consisting of sensuous givens that have had their immediacy overridden by becoming mediated by something that possesses them all equally. Consciousness accordingly perceived a thing with properties, where the "thing" simply comprised the bond that mediates factors that are otherwise given in the manifold confronting sense-certainty. They have no intrinsic connection to one another or to the whole which unites them. This renders them properties, which as such are indifferent to one another. Their indifference to the whole and to one another is exhibited in their interpenetrating "porosity," whereby the presence of one property in the thing in no way limits or otherwise affects the presence of any others. The properties do not displace one another, but rather are possessed by the thing without presenting any resistance or attraction to one another.

Consciousness cannot help but find it problematic to know the thing in its unity with its properties. The universal it confronts is conditioned by the given sensuous content it draws from sense-certainty, in that this content is extraneously present, just as the unity of the thing in no way determines what properties belong to it. Each such content is indifferently at hand, owing nothing to the presence of the other properties or its possession by the thing.

For these reasons, the properties have no intrinsic connection to each other or to the whole, and perceiving consciousness finds itself confronting a groundless collection of independent sensuous matters. The properties thus revert into independent matters that subsist within a medium that is completely passive with regard to them. There is nothing about that medium that gives itself any exclusive individuality, making it begin and end anywhere in particular. As a result, perceiving consciousness confronts two alternate configurations, the thing and its properties and the passive medium of indepen-

dent sensuous matters, which neither fit together nor unite their own aspects of unity and difference.

In response, consciousness takes upon itself one of these aspects so as to attribute the other one to the object and obtain some coherent truth. Perception can do this with regard to both sides. On the one hand, perceiving consciousness can purport to be the source of the diversity, due to manifold character of its own modes of perception, redeeming the unity of the object. Insofar as the perceiver has the particular kind of sensibility that it has, it perceives the thing as having different properties reflecting not the thing in itself, but differences in the cognitive apparatus of the perceiver. This makes the perceiving consciousness the medium of these different sense perceptions, allowing the object to be independently unitary. Consciousness, however, cannot help but discover that this ploy is inadequate. Once consciousness tries to separate the aspect of diversity from the object by laying it on the subject, the object becomes indeterminate, leaving conscious confronting nothing but sheer immediacy rather than something universal.

Perceiving consciousness must thus somehow give back diversity to the object. To do this without undermining the aspect of unity, consciousness has the alternate option of placing the unity in the act of perception. Consciousness leaves the diversity intact, as a multitude of independent sensuous matters, and puts their grouping in the act of perceiving, which moves from one sensuous matter to another. In this way, the diverse elements remain genuinely independent, excluding one another and not being obliterated by any objective union that cannot contain their differentiation as part of its identity. Once more, however, perceiving consciousness cannot know the truth it is after. By making the unity of the independent sensuous matters reside in the subjective act of perception, consciousness finds itself confronting once more immediately present sensuous contents instead of a universal object.

Perceiving consciousness, however, cannot just revert back to sense-certainty. That route is excluded for two reasons. First, sense-certainty has proven itself to lead to perception through its own dynamic. So any reversion to sense-certainty takes consciousness back to confronting a thing and its properties. Second, perceiving consciousness has not just experienced that the object is a sensuous given. It has further experienced that the object and the perceiving subject take on alternately both sides of universal unity and sensuous difference.

The latter experience is what provides the transition to the third development of perception, which must now be observed. How does consciousness perceive the object to have both sides, which have not so far been successfully combined at either pole at once? Consciousness does so by perceiving the object to stand in a relation to other objects where each thing has both an intrinsic unity, given apart from its relation to other objects, and an extraneous differentiation contingent upon that relation. Each thing is now perceived

to have an essential character, independent of anything else, as well as differences depending upon its relation to other things. In this way, the thing is perceived to be what it is apart from others, while at the same time having a diversity falling outside it in its relation to other things. Each thing is both self-equal and different from others. The thing in itself is just at one with itself, possessing a simple being of its own without any intrinsic differentiation. In this way, it possesses the type of universal that has been at stake throughout perception. The element of difference lies outside it, in the thing's relation to other things. Instead of having a diversity of properties that cannot be integrated into its unity, the thing is different in its relation to other things. The sensuous manifold here reappears as the determination of the thing in its relation to other things, rather than as properties related only to the unity of the thing. On this basis, consciousness now perceives its object to be differentiated in respect to others while retaining a simple being of its own, where it is at one with itself.

In conjunction with this simple self-equality and diversity in relation to other, Hegel observes a further differentiation that inseparably unfolds.<sup>15</sup> Namely, although the thing has a simple character in itself, its relation to other things gives it a diversity in itself and not just outside itself. This is because the thing not only has an intrinsic essential nature, but also has a relation to other things that gives it an extraneous, contingent nature. Both sides are inextricably part of its character, even though one is essential and the other is inessential. The thing can be perceived to be simple in itself only insofar as it is also perceived to be determinately distinct from other things. Otherwise it becomes just as empty as the thing became when deprived of its properties.

The two sides, the one of simple self-equality and the other of diversity, have thus come to be, respectively, the essential and inessential properties of the thing. The essential property is the intrinsic constitution of the thing, whereas the inessential property is the extraneous determination the thing acquires, reflecting its relation to other things. The sensuous diversity of the thing is now what is inessential, whereas its universal unity is what is essential.

The distinction of essential and inessential aspects does not involve any reference to a genus or species being of the thing, on the basis of which the thing has properties that belong necessarily to its nature and others that are incidental. The essential/inessential divide refers to the much more basic distinction between the constitution of the thing, the simple being of what it is in itself, and the determination of the thing, the differentiated sensuous character it has in virtue of its contrastive relation to other things.

What Hegel now observes consciousness experiencing is the collapse of this differentiation of essential and inessential aspects.<sup>16</sup> This collapse occurs because the essential character of the thing, which resides in what it is in

itself apart from its relation to other, cannot be separated from that relation. The relation to other, which gives the thing a diversity extraneous to its simple identity, is just as essential as its self-equality. This is because that simple self-equality depends upon the thing retaining some diversity that it must obtain from its entanglement with other things. Without that extraneous relation, the thing loses the aspect of differentiated content on which its perceivable reality depends. By the same token, the thing's relation to other things cannot occur unless the thing has a being of its own that is susceptible of entering into relationships. Consequently, the two sides cannot be detached from one another. This means, however, that the difference between the essential and inessential aspects cannot be upheld, for the inessential turns out to be just as essential as the essential.

This becomes evident if consciousness tries to perceive the thing just in terms of its essential simple self-equality. Insofar as that essential character has no further properties of its own, its self-equality cannot be distinguished from that of any other thing. In themselves, they are all indistinguishable, for each one is self-equal. Their identity as individual things really depends upon their contrast with one another, which involves their relation to what they are not. The self-relation of each thing thus rests upon its relation to another. Since the essential and inessential properties rest upon these correlative relations, they are equally correlative, undercutting the primacy of the essential over the inessential and their difference from one another.

This collapse confronts perceiving consciousness with a revised understanding of its object. The sensuous contents of things, which have come to figure as the inessential properties serving to contrast objects with one another, have come to lose their distinction from the essential unity of the thing. As a result consciousness faces a situation where all of the distinctions that it tried to impute to the object have collapsed into one another. What consciousness has come to confront through the experience of perception is the process of the reversion of the distinguished aspects into one another, a process in which each factor posits its counterpart as something that equally posits itself. This new construal of the object will provide the threshold of a new shape of consciousness warranting the title of "Understanding."

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 109, pp. 64–65.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1990).
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 111, p. 67.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 111, p. 67.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 88, p. 56.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 111, p. 67.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 113, p. 68.

8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 117, p. 71.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 117, p. 70.
10. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), 1:216, 228–29.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 121, p. 73.
12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 121, p. 73.
13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 123, p. 74.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 123, p. 74.
15. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 124, p. 75, and para. 127, p. 76.
16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 128–29, pp. 76–77.





## *Lecture 4*

# Understanding

### PART 1

Hegel's observation of the shape of consciousness of understanding is one of the longest and most difficult sections in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Like the observations of sense-certainty and perception, it involves a succession of self-examinations of different construals of the object, all of which fall within the boundaries of a single general shape.

Consciousness as understanding first confronts an object consisting in force and its expression. The ensuing experience centers upon the relationship between the unity of force and what comprises its differentiation. In the relation of a thing and its properties, the unity of the thing is indifferent to its sensuous content and consciousness perceives its properties to be simply given. By contrast, consciousness understands force to be the source of its differentiation. Force posits, rather than just possesses, what provides its manifold content.

Due to the difficulty of sustaining any difference between force and its expression, understanding consciousness next finds itself addressing one force interacting with another force, where one force elicits another to express itself. This relation of forces will entail a swapping of roles, whereby the soliciting force and the solicited force end up exchanging functions.

What results, is a further construal of the object as an appearance governed by law. The working through of this experience will lead to a final stage of understanding, which Hegel observes under the rubric of the "inverted world." There consciousness confronts a supersensible domain that underlies appearance and, in that respect, determines something different from itself. This development will bring understanding and the entire first section of "consciousness" to closure, exhausting the possible construals of

the object as something different from consciousness and ushering in the first shape of self-consciousness.

Accordingly, our task lies in identifying these different operations of understanding, determining how they lead from one to another, and investigating how understanding leads to something that takes us beyond the shapes of consciousness to the initial shape of self-consciousness.

To begin with, the object as it has emerged from the self-examination of perception is characterized in two respects: in regard to how it differs from what went before in perception and in regard to how it differs from what is to emerge from understanding and bring on self-consciousness.

The initial characterization of consciousness's new object is formulated in direct contrast to the object of perception. Namely, whereas perception confronts a conditioned universal, understanding confronts an unconditioned universal. The conditioned universal emerged from sense-certainty as a sensuous universal that mediates the sensuous manifold that consciousness confronted in trying to know immediately what is. The object of perception was a conditioned and equally sensuous universal because the perceived thing united sensuous properties that are independently given and thereby indifferent to its unity. To some degree, empirical concepts might all be considered conditioned, sensuous universals, since they are generalizations from given sensuous contents, depending upon that independent filling. When something is conditioned, it is determined by something else. Perception's abiding problem revolved around how its object had a unity that was unable to determine the content of the sensuous manifold it united. So long as that content was extraneously given, the unity of the thing was conditioned and problematic. Perception confronted the simple unity of its object and a manifold associated with that unity, but perception could only flit back and forth from one to the other without being able to account for the connection of the two sides of the universal it addressed. The unity of its universal was still separate from the diversity or individuality of its content. Due to this separation, the object could not be fully in relation to itself in its content. Rather, it stood in connection with a content alien to it.

Empirical concepts exhibit this dependency upon extraneous givens. Insofar as empirical concepts are abstracted from a given manifold, thought does not generate the differentiations of the universality they possess. If one characterizes universals as if they were all conditioned universals, one must follow Kant in maintaining that thought is empty without intuition. As comprised of conditioned universals, thought must get its individuated content from something else.

With the shape of understanding, however, consciousness confronts an unconditioned universal. What allows this universal to be unconditioned is that it contains the dual processes whereby its unity determines its diversity of content and this diversity reverts back to this unity.

Further, this universality has a character that is no longer sensuous. Consciousness as understanding confronts an object whose true character resides in something beyond sensuous appearance. The object of understanding is not a conditioned sensuous universal such as perception confronted in vacillating between a thing possessing properties and independent sensuous matters.

Where then does the unconditioned element reside? From the beginning of understanding, consciousness confronts an object that has a dynamic character. This dynamic aspect is apprehended as force and the expression or play of force. These two sides relate to one another in a process that contains their dual reversion into one another. Namely, force posits its expression and that expression is nothing but a manifestation of force. Here consciousness opposes a unity that generates its own diversification and a diversification that resolves itself into that unity. The relationship of the universal and its individuation or its differentiation is not extraneous but internal to it. In at least some respect, the object accounts for its own manifold determination. It is necessary to speak of in “some” respect, because consciousness will find that extraneous determination remains at hand.

Nonetheless, the experience of understanding will present another side, indicative of its position as the final shape of consciousness that does not yet involve self-consciousness. Through its very own self-examination, understanding is going to lead to a configuration of consciousness where consciousness confronts an object that is itself. When this is achieved, the shape of understanding will have given way to the first shape of self-consciousness.

The prospect of this development suggests that the unconditioned universal confronting understanding is not yet the self. That is, when consciousness as understanding construes its object as the unconditioned universal, it is relating to something that does not have consciousness’s own process or, at least, to something that consciousness does not recognize to be its own process. Yet, if the outcome of the self-examination of understanding is self-consciousness, then the experience of understanding is one in which the dynamic process of the unconditioned universal turns out to have the same character as consciousness itself. Only then will the attempt to understand this unconditioned universal leave consciousness confronting itself as an object.

If such proves to be the case, then this unconditioned universal has something about it that does not allow consciousness to find itself in what is over and against it. Yet, it will still result in something that turns out to have the form of self-consciousness.

Before beginning the observation of understanding, it is helpful to have in anticipatory focus three different characterizations that Hegel will employ in depicting what the object of understanding turns out to be in truth.

First, the object will end up being characterized as the genuine infinite. This is not the non-finite infinite, defined in contrast to the finite. That abiding contrast leaves the infinite with a beyond rendering it finite as well. The genuine infinite has no such limit, but contains the finite within itself.

Second, the object will be characterized as life. That is, the dynamic process of the object of understanding will turn out to be an organic process.

Third, the object will be consciousness itself and understanding will give way to self-consciousness. Nonetheless, when the object of understanding turns into consciousness, the resulting self-consciousness will not be equivalent to consciousness. This discrepancy will prove to be significant. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a whole is divided into three broad sections, each comprising what might be considered a distinct mode of consciousness: consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason. Reason, which contains “spirit,” will be characterized as a unity of self-consciousness and consciousness. Understanding will lead not to reason but to self-consciousness, which is not yet in unity with consciousness.

The genuine infinite, life, and consciousness, the three coinciding characterizations of what the object of understanding turns out to be in truth, provide the endpoints of the observation at stake. Even if the unconditioned universal may end up becoming something so construed, it does not yet have that threefold character. We will need to consider why the unconditioned universal does not yet have these aspects, as well as what is going to allow it to obtain them.

As noted above, the observation of understanding develops through three subdivisions, just as did the observations of perception and sense-certainty. Let us consider these divisions in more preliminary detail.

Consciousness as understanding begins by confronting as its object the unconditioned universal construed as “force.” Force, as such, has two sides: genuine real force and its expression. Force generates its expression and its expression consists of precisely the diversity that consciousness encountered in the object of perception. Now that diversity figures as something posited, rather than merely possessed, by its unity. The unity, force, differentiates itself into this diversity, which is its expression, and force is nothing other than the positing of that content.

Locke’s account of perception presents a very similar development. In dissecting the problem of perceiving the thing and its properties, Locke recognizes that properties, as simple ideas, have no mediated content that could secure any connection to one another, let alone to any particular substrate that might possess them. We just happen to find them in conjunction with one another. Locke realized that if we want to make their togetherness something objective, rather than mere coincidence or subjective association, we need to introduce force. We need to understand the thing to have the power to

hold those sensuous properties under its sway, that is, to be the encompassing force whose expression is their united differentiation.<sup>1</sup>

Perception thus leads to an understanding of force and its expression. The expression manifests nothing other than the force that posits it. The expression is the expression of force. Yet force is such that it is force only insofar as it is distinguished from its expression. Only then can force be a process of positing, where the object's unity engenders its diversification and its diversification exhibits nothing but that dynamic unity.

Both sides of identity and difference can be maintained if the expression of force is *another* force. Accordingly, Hegel moves from the observation of force and expression to an observation of the relation of force to force. This move rests upon the expression of force turning out to be just as equivalent as distinct from force. On this basis, what force generates as its expression is another force. This presents consciousness with a relationship of forces, where one is the so-called soliciting force and the other is the force solicited by it. Force expresses itself, causing another force to do the same.

In confronting this play of forces, consciousness experiences that the forces swap roles: the soliciting force is just as much solicited by what it solicits. This is because a force can only solicit another force insofar as that other force does what it is to be solicited. So the "solicited" force actually solicits its counterpart, reversing roles and leaving both forces playing each role in succession.

Consciousness thus experiences that the forces in play are not really distinguishable, but do exactly the same thing. This result provides the transition to the second broad division of "Understanding," where consciousness confronts a "constant inconstancy" that applies universally to the dynamic transformations it encounters. These transformations first appeared as the workings of force and its expression, which reverted into a relation of forces to one another, whose play undermined the distinction between the forces. This rendered them indistinguishable bearers of the same process, exemplifying the same law of transformations or inconstancy.

What consciousness now has is an understanding that confronts a universality that takes the form of law and the flux that is governed by the law. The flux in question is characterized as the sensuous appearance of this law, which itself is supersensible. In trying to understand objects in these terms, consciousness finds, however, that this conception of law is inherently deficient.

On the one hand, the law, as merely universal, does not contain the entire diversity of appearances. The law, of course, has some determinate content, but it cannot have the entire content of the appearances. This means that in these respects, the appearances are not really just appearances. They have an aspect that is not an appearance of the law insofar as it is not accounted for by the law.

On the other hand, insofar as law is determinate, there is a plurality of laws. The differentiated content of the many laws, however, does not derive from the constancy of law any more than does the full differentiation of appearances. How is the plurality of laws to be accounted for? Where does it come from?

Consciousness is tempted to resolve this problem by coming up with a law of laws. This would be tantamount to a universal law of attraction mandating that all fluctuations are governed by a certain constant. Once more, however, there is a difficulty in deriving the distinguishing features of each law from the law of laws that governs them all. Law has to have some differentiation within it to have any kind of lawfulness and that involves a distinction like that between force and its expression all within the supersensible domain of law.

The experience of these difficulties leads to the final section of “Understanding.” Here consciousness comes to confront how the differences specified by law really turn out to be just as indistinguishable from law as force and its expression. When consciousness attempts to explain law, it experiences that the operation of law is fundamentally tautological, that what is different is really identical. This leads to a different kind of lawfulness, the inverse of the universal law of attraction. This new law is a law of the inconstancy of what is constant, of how what is like repels itself from itself and becomes unlike, and of how unlike attract and become like. This new law thus comprises a supersensible world that is the opposite of what it seems to be in appearance. Here appearances are in truth the reverse, the opposite of what we perceive them to be. This “inverted world” is going to lead to something that will present consciousness with infinity, life, or consciousness as the object. Such is the itinerary that lies before us.

## PART 2

Hegel begins the observation proper of understanding in paragraph 136. The starting point is provided by what the object of perception has been experienced to be. Hegel describes what consciousness now confronts as having two sides, which clearly reflect the outcome of perception. On the one hand, consciousness opposes the essence of the object, a universal that is in undivided unity with the multiplicity of sensuous content it contains. On the other hand, consciousness opposes the independence of that manifold content, which is nothing other than the universal that is their medium. Consciousness confronts their passage into their unity and the unfolding of this unity into their diversity. These are the paths that perception ended up following in being unable to sustain these sides in separation from one another. They reverted back into one another. The resulting movement as a whole is what

Hegel calls “force.” Accordingly, the two sides of this dynamic are the constitutive sides of force.

There is a certain ambiguity in the description of the two aspects or moments of force because one of them gets associated with force itself. The movement in which the unity unfolds into its diversification is characterized as the expression of force, whereas the other moment is characterized as force proper or genuine force. Expression is the propagation of the independent matters, the element of the “othering” or differentiation of the object of understanding. The “genuine force” is the gathering of this multiplicity into a unity. That unity does not hold them present, but rather is that into which they vanish. This is because their diversification has proven to be a vanishing into a unity, a unity which is force because it just as soon expresses itself in their multiplicity.

Consequently, Hegel can describe the vanishing of the multiplicity as force driven back into itself.<sup>2</sup> Force, after all, is a unity that posits its differentiation or is that which is its own process of differentiation. Yet, what force posits as its expression is nothing but its own expression, for force exists only in expressing itself. Since the expression is just as much force itself, the expression immediately vanishes as something independent. The expression is a differentiation that emerges from something that does not yet have that differentiation, but, as an expression, it has the character of being nothing but the posit of force. Expression is force’s self-expression. So, in its expression, force is driven back into itself, a self that has no further character than that which expresses itself. Force must express itself, for otherwise it ceases to be force.

What makes force count as the unconditioned universal is that the necessity of its expression lies in itself. Its differentiating movement is not conditioned by anything external. Force is thus the dynamic process in which it posits a differentiation that is *its* differentiation and thereby closes with itself.

The development that follows revolves around the interdependence of the two sides of the dynamic. Force as force has to have expression. There has to be some distinction between force and its expression for force to be force and for the expression to be the expression of force. Yet their distinction equally undermines itself through its own dynamic. The nature of the distinction is that the force immediately translates itself into its expression and the expression is immediately an expression of force on something different from itself. Although each side is therefore equivalent, they cannot collapse into a unity with no differentiation. Each side still involves a dynamic process with a passage from force to expression and back again. This is why consciousness’s understanding of force and its expression ends up confronting a relationship between forces. Force may be relating to something equivalent to itself, but it is still something other. The process of force thus turns out to be a relationship where one force posits another force, which, as force, has its

own expression. The posited force is the solicited force, whereas the positing force is the solicitor.

The difference between the two forces is thus, to begin with, a difference of form. Namely, one force, the solicitor, is active, activating the other force. The solicited force, on the other hand, is passive, insofar as it is acted upon by its counterpart.

Is there, however, any way of distinguishing the two forces with respect to content? If one were to transpose the relation of force and its expression upon the formal distinction of solicitor and solicited, it might appear that the solicitor is the element of the unity and the solicited is the element of diversification. Yet, since both terms are forces, they both involve unity and differentiation, force and its expression. So, in this respect the contents are not really distinguishable. How then, can the forces really remain distinct, as their relationship requires?

The two forces constantly render themselves distinct and independent, but, at the same time, they constantly resolve themselves into identical factors. Each, as force cannot help but express itself in order to be what it is. In each case, the expression is an expression only insofar as it is the realization of the force. The expression allows the force to be the force. So, the expression, although being a differentiation or becoming other of the force, is nevertheless that by means of which the force becomes force or realizes itself as force.

In paragraph 137, the emergence of the play of forces is observed. Force itself contains two moments that are distinguished from each other, the expression and the genuine force. The force itself, as a whole, contains both. It is the positing of the independent matters and their reversion to unity. This movement involves the sensuous material that is perceived, but presents it in the entirety of its movement, where the unity passes into a diversification and the diversification passes into a unity. This one process is a universal that differentiates itself by pervading and closing with itself. Consciousness here encounters one force relating to another force because there is both an identity and a differentiation between the two sides of the object. That is, the expression has to have some independence to be an expression, yet at the same time it has to be the same as force. Accordingly, consciousness understands the dynamic of force and its expression as being equivalent to a relationship between two forces, where one solicits the other. Here one force is active and the other force is passive, going into action thanks to the first force. As we have seen, the difference between the two rests not on any difference of content, but solely on the difference of form: one force is soliciting, the other is solicited.

Yet, as Hegel observes, the difference of form undermines itself insofar as the forces switch roles due to their very relationship.<sup>3</sup> The force that solicits another force ends up being solicited by the force it solicits. This



occurs in a manner analogous to how the dynamic of force and its expression turns into a relationship of forces. Just as force is force in virtue of its expression, so force is soliciting only insofar as the other force is solicited. So the solicited force turns out to solicit the force that activates it. A similar reversal occurs in the relation of cause and effect, which Hegel analyses in his treatment of cause and effect in *The Science of Logic*.<sup>4</sup> A cause is a cause only in virtue of its effect. The effect is what allows the cause to be a cause, for the cause cannot be a cause without the effect. So, in this regard, the effect causes the cause to be a cause. Hence, the effect, by being an effect, operates also as a cause. By the same token, the cause, by causing its effect, which allows it to be a cause, is the effect of its effect. Both sides therefore take on the role of their opposite. This reversal is something pointed out by the ancient skeptics of Western philosophy, as well as by their ancient Indian Carvaka school counterparts.

Consciousness accordingly experiences that the soliciting force posits the solicited force, as well as that the solicited force, in being solicited, enables the soliciting force to be soliciting. The active force cannot be soliciting unless there is a passive force that it activates. So, in being solicited, the second, passive force solicits the soliciting of the first force. The passive force thus takes on the active character of the other force in being solicited. As a result, both forces prove to be soliciting and solicited in virtue of playing their different roles with respect to one another. It is precisely in virtue of their differentiated functions—the fact that one is active and the other is passive—that they swap roles and end up both being active and passive.

What now does consciousness confront, having experienced this doubling of force, where each force is both solicitor and solicited, undermining the difference in form that initially distinguished them? The play of forces has reverted into a single movement, where the transformations of each force are governed by the same process. The erstwhile active and passive forces have turned out to undergo the same alternations, removing any abiding distinction between them. All exhibit the same pattern of fluctuation, which now confronts consciousness with a constant commonality governing the dynamic transformations in the diversity of what is perceivable. Movement still occurs, since force is bound up with expression, with the positing of a differentiated sensuous content. This movement, however, now presents a “sameness of inconstancy.” This resulting commonality is a kind of universal that supplants the differentiation of forces with the operation of a shared constancy in the flux of the posited phenomena. What consciousness understands its object to be is the stable unity underlying the fluctuations of what is sensibly perceivable.

In paragraph 141 Hegel observes what consciousness is left with when the play of forces leaves them unable to sustain their distinction from one

another as soliciting and solicited powers. Having proven themselves to comprise the same process, they collapse into an undifferentiated unity. Here, Hegel notes, consciousness confronts force as it is in its true essence as the object of the understanding. Whereas force began by driving back into itself from its outer sensible expression, now, Hegel observes, consciousness confronts the inner of things as inner. Force began by containing in one whole the process in which sensuous properties and matters were posited and brought back to unity. Now, consciousness confronts what emerges from the process wherein force and its expression became a play of forces whose own distinction undermined itself. This result, Hegel observes, is the law of the flux of sensuous dynamics. This law is the inner being of perceived objectivity, which has become a world of phenomena. Consciousness confronts this dynamic manifold as a world of phenomena in that it is continually vanishing through its alterations into something that remains at one with itself, namely, the underlying sameness of inconstancy, the law of appearances.

Hegel observes that the law of appearances presents a kind of syllogism, where extremes are connected by a middle term.<sup>5</sup> The appearances are the middle term, through which consciousness as understanding connects with its true object. Consciousness now understands its true object to be a supersensible law, an unchanging universal that determines the flux of what it perceives. The perceived appearances manifest something beyond themselves, something unchanging underlying and determining their continual dynamic process. The perceived phenomena are understood to be a curtain of appearances behind whose flux consciousness peers into the genuine inner reality of which they are the mere semblance.

That inner reality is here determined as a realm of law, an unalterable constant governing the flux of sensible appearances. The flux of phenomena is nothing other than the appearance of this unchanging, supersensible essence, which is thereby the truth of appearance. Appearance is just what the law posits.

The law is the same for all expressions of force in the dynamic process of sensible appearance. At the same time, the law is something distinct from the sensuous phenomena it orders. Unlike the sensuous, conditioned universal of perception, the law of the understanding is supersensible. It should also be an unconditioned universal, insofar as it governs a flux of appearance whose dynamic generates sensible properties instead of finding them extraneously given.

Moreover, the law, unlike the simple unity of the thing with properties, has its own supersensible content, which determinately regulates the flux of appearances. In this regard, consciousness confronts a universal, which, as law, has some specification, some difference in it. This difference in the law, however, is not a sensible differentiation, but a specification of insensible factors comprising a determinate rule by means of which the flux of sensible

appearance is constantly governed. Consciousness understands this law to be what is genuinely true, relegating sensible phenomena to the status of mere appearance. As appearance, the sensible phenomena are the manifestation of something else that underlies them. Consciousness does not take the sensible phenomena as they are given immediately, but understands them to be a posit of the supersensible law. Nonetheless, the phenomena have a given sensible content that is different from the supersensible content of the law. This given sensible content of the phenomena is not what objectivity truly is, but rather the reflection of the law, which is determinative of sensible phenomena in their dynamic process. Insofar as sensible appearance is regarded as not being immediate, but as being determined by something that lies beyond its sensible domain, consciousness understands there to be a supersensible domain, which is what the appearances really denote. This supersensible domain is what consciousness must know if it is to know what is in truth.

Hegel will tell us in one of the final paragraphs of this chapter that understanding is going to discover that in taking sensible reality as phenomenal, it is going to peer beyond into another realm in which consciousness ultimately finds nothing but itself.<sup>6</sup> Consciousness as understanding will prove unable to discover anything distinctly objective behind the curtain of sensible appearance, but will instead encounter its own activity. This experience will provide the transition to a shape of consciousness that has the form of self-consciousness.

What then do we observe happening when consciousness understands what it confronts as being the sensible appearance of supersensible law? Initially, consciousness confronts law as the one and only law of force. It applies to all forces equally, insofar as the play of forces has removed the formal difference of active and passive forces and left all forces governed by the same rule. Since all forces end up playing the same roles, they exhibit the same process and that process is specifiable in terms of *a* law.

Nonetheless, Hegel observes there to be a realm of laws, suggesting that consciousness confronts not just one, but a plurality of laws. He does not explicitly explain why this is the case, but an explanation should be sought by examining the relation of law and sensible appearance. The law is a law of force and it applies to how all forces operate because forces end up having the same form and the same general content. Not only do all forces both solicit and get solicited, but they all involve an expression, whose diversification equally remains at one with force.

Hegel mentions a problem that affects law as such, irrespective of whether it is one or many.<sup>7</sup> This is that a law is invariable, yet it governs a process of change in which law does not supply the exhaustive content of what is governed by law. Whereas the law is universal, the flux it governs involves variation and multiplicity. The law does not contain that sensible differentiation in its own insensible content. If it did, there would be no difference

between the sensible appearance and the insensible domain governing its process. Law as law *of* appearance instead requires that there be sensible differentiation that is not exhaustively determined by law. Yet, if appearance has, and indeed, must have, an element that law leaves unspecified, then appearance has a dimension that is given independently of law. In other words, there must be something about sensible “appearance” that is not an appearance of law. Properly speaking, the appearance of law is only that which law does specify. Law may specify the regularity of the flux of appearance, but it cannot specify all the details of that flux. The individuality of appearance falls outside law. This is why judges are needed to apply law to particular cases. The law cannot specify everything about the particular cases that fall under it. In the case of understanding, sensible appearance turns out to not be in its entirety the appearance it has been taken to be and the supersensible law has turned out not to be the determiner of all sensible phenomena. Must understanding play the role of a judge to overcome this discrepancy?

Consciousness here experiences that sensible phenomena is not really just appearance. The flux of phenomena contains an element that is non-derivative from law. In that respect, the sensible domain has an independent immediacy that is not absorbed into the unity of law. So the law fails to do what it is supposed to be doing. Law is supposed to be what is true reality, but consciousness confronts a reality that law cannot account for, which means conversely that sensible phenomena are not just appearance.

The question of whether law entails a plurality of laws has to do with the related issue of the determinate character of law. Law cannot be indeterminate for it must have some specification to govern appearances, even if that specification falls within the domain of the supersensible. To be determinate, however, law must stand in contrast to an other law, which it is not. Consequently, for law to be determinate, it must be one among a plurality of laws that are differentiated from one another. Their plurality may provide for the determinate character of the supersensible domain they constitute, but it does not remove the problem of sensible appearances retaining aspects that are not exhaustively determined by law, be law singular or plural.

The plurality of laws does introduce a problem of its own, resembling that concerning the thing and its properties. Namely, how do the different laws hold together in the domain of the supersensible? Are they indifferent to one another, like properties of a thing that interpenetrate one another without any interference or exclusion? If so, what unites them? Further, what accounts for their own differentiated content? Must there be a law of laws to ensure their unity and posit their individual specifications?

Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, stipulated a plurality of a priori laws of the pure understanding, the so-called principles of experience, which determined all appearances.<sup>8</sup> Kant derived their plurality from the plurality of

forms of judgment and the categories that these forms involved. Yet, nowhere does Kant account for the plurality of the forms of judgment. All he does, as Hegel critically notes on numerous occasions, is appeal to the fact of Aristotelian logic as a source for their enumeration.

Kant, of course, maintains that the understanding mandates laws to appearance. What the understanding mandates, however, is not so much particular laws, as the general lawfulness of appearances. In particular, the understanding mandates that for there to be any objective sequence in time and any possibility of uniting representations into something objective, there must be a causal law to the effect that what follows an antecedent state of affairs has to follow it necessarily. That causal principle of experience notoriously does not allow us to pick out any determinate object as determining anything else specifically. To do so and locate a particular law would seem to rely upon experience, because all the principle of causality provides is the general lawfulness of experience. Yet, as Kant himself shows, observation cannot be the basis for establishing any laws proper. Law proper requires universality and necessity, but particular observed experiences are always particular and contingent. It is far from clear how one can come up with any other particular laws, nor how one can understand the law to be substantiated in any particular case. Kant will employ the terms of mechanics, whose laws apply to matter in motion with indifference to the formal nature of any object. Yet this still leaves the problem of how one gets to any particular laws or the problem of how one can account for the features of things that go beyond their materiality.

Hegel, by contrast, expressly observes the plurality of laws of appearance to be a problem for consciousness as understanding. He does acknowledge that Newtonian mechanics provides a law that pertains to all motion and supplants the particular laws of motion that applied exclusively to different spheres, such as that of celestial bodies as opposed to that of terrestrial bodies.<sup>9</sup> But does this move to a single law save the appearances in all their diversity? A plurality of laws might better fit, but what if they cannot be unified by any higher principle?

Consciousness takes the laws as being what is genuinely objective. The real object is supersensible and what it posits as its manifestation is just appearance. Yet from where does the content of the plurality of laws derive? Throughout the shape of consciousness as understanding, the object is an unconditioned supersensible universal. Can the differentiated content of plural laws retain that unconditioned character? Force, to begin with, was supposed to be that which posits the content of phenomena and is not conditioned by any given content. There seems to be no way of generating what distinguishes the different laws from one another out of law itself. From where, then, does the necessity of any particular law come? It cannot derive from observation, given the particular and conditioned character of appear-

ances. This problem applies not just to the plurality of laws but to law itself insofar as law must be determinate. What can provide the necessity for the specific content of law?

This question drives the turn to the last section of “Understanding” and it comes to a head with consciousness having to bring into the conception of law the notion of force. Initially, law was the law of force—governing forces in general, subjecting them in their operation to a common working that is manifest in them all in the alternation of soliciting and being solicited. Law then had to have some determinate content in the insensible, supersensible realm, to govern appearances determinately. In order for this determinate content to avoid being conditioned on sensible appearance, it had to have a supersensible source, just as the process of sensible appearance has to have a determining essence. What supplies this determining basis for the particular content of law is a force whose manifestation is the specification of law. So, for example, the law of gravitational attraction is a manifestation of the force of gravity, just as the law of electrical polar relations is a manifestation of electrical force. By understanding each law to give expression to a particular force, the determinacy of law is itself given a supersensible ground. Gravity grounds the law of gravitational attraction just as electrical force grounds the law of electricity. Gravitational law expresses gravitational force just as the law of electricity expresses electrical force.

### PART 3

Force now reenters the supersensible domain, as the source for the differentiation of laws. Whereas before, force posited phenomenal sensible appearance, consciousness as understanding now invokes force to posit the supersensible content of law. Consciousness does so in offering an explanation for the determinate laws that govern appearance. As Hegel observes, laws specify relationships between the alteration of factors (e.g., time and distance).<sup>10</sup> The factors themselves do not have any intrinsic relation to begin with, so their presence together in the law is something external. Further, the law has a specific content, but law as such does not generate the contents that distinguish particular laws. So within the supersensible realm of law there is a need to account for the necessity of its determinations.

Consciousness understands force to ground the determination of law, and in paragraph 153, Hegel observes how consciousness proceeds with its explanation. Consciousness understands law to specify how sensible things undergo dynamic alterations, doing so in terms of how the underlying force operates. This explanation invokes a force, such as the force of gravity, as the determining unity of the content of the law. Yet force is something simple, whereas the law has distinguished moments and a determinate relationship.

Can consciousness identify a force, such as the force of gravity, apart from the law that specifies how things are affected by it? Is there any separate specification that consciousness can point to or is the force just indistinguishable from the law that is its expression? Just as force and its expression in sensible appearance involved a distinction that turned out to be no distinction, so the explanation of law in terms of force presents an empty tautology. Consciousness tries to explain the lawful alteration of things by appealing to a force, such as the force of gravity. That force, however, is nothing other than the lawful operation associated with it. There is no independent way of defining a force and giving it any definiteness. Consciousness's attempted explanation only rehashes the content of the law without providing any answer as to why the law is what it is. This inability to move beyond description to a genuine explanation can be ascribed to modern science whenever it explains observed phenomena by invoking some force as the cause of things occurring in a patterned way, where that force has no independent identity apart from the law itself. The explanation goes around and around in a circle.

Hegel describes consciousness's conundrum in paragraph 155. Consciousness understands law to be essential and not contingent, seeking an explanation of its determinate content in force. Yet force has no independent being of its own, for the only way of identifying it is in terms of the law that is its expression. Consciousness thus finds itself just going around in circles. Instead of explaining, it merely describes what it finds given. Since consciousness proves unable to establish what content the law should have by invoking force, it has no basis for the law apart from the appearances. The law is just descriptive, conditioned and contingent rather than unconditioned and necessary. The appeal to force just reiterates what is there, adding nothing but a tautology.

The dilemma of explanation exposes to consciousness how its whole understanding of law fails to get at what can count as true objectivity—at least as far as law has so far been construed. Hegel suggests that the experience of this failure leads consciousness to another kind of law, a law that generates what he calls an “inverted world.”<sup>11</sup> This world is inverted in that its law still applies to the world of phenomena, but does so by specifying that the truth of the phenomenal world is the opposite of how it appears. In paragraph 156, Hegel observes how the law of appearance that arose from the play of forces presents distinctions that are no distinctions at all. One is tempted to ask, which are the distinctions that are no distinctions at all? Are they the distinctions within the dynamic of phenomena, or are they the distinctions between force and phenomena or between force and law? Hegel provides an important clue in how the second law is characterized in opposition to law as it initially came forward. First, law mandated that enduring distinctions remain the same—that what is equal remain equal, what is different remain different. Now, the second law instead establishes the constancy

of inconstancy. This second law is a law of the becoming unequal of the equal and of the becoming equal of the unequal. Translated in terms of attraction and repulsion, the second law signifies that equals will repel themselves, whereas things that are different will attract one another. Applied to the sensible world, this second law determines the truth of phenomena to be the reverse of how they appear. Governed by the second law, what is alike in the sensible world is understood to be actually unlike itself and what is unlike in sensible phenomena is understood to become like itself. Hegel suggests that this inversion arises through consciousness's experience that the distinctions presented by law turn out to be no distinctions. He also describes this inversion as bringing to completion consciousness's understanding of appearances in terms of a supersensible universal.

The completion in question is developed in connection with the terms that will figure prominently in characterizing the object of the next shape of consciousness, which comprises the first shape of self-consciousness. Namely, Hegel connects the experience of the inverted world, in which the supersensible realm is the truth of appearance such that phenomena are genuinely the opposite of how they appear, with the characterization of objectivity being infinite. In paragraph 160, Hegel observes that consciousness now confronts an objectivity where difference is inner, where there is genuine inner difference. What is this inner difference and what is its connection to infinity?

First of all, objectivity as infinite will not have any limit. It will not have any genuine otherness. On the other hand, objectivity as infinite will not be indeterminate. It has to have some kind of determinacy, but its determinacy cannot be based upon anything external. In this respect, objectivity as infinite could be understood to be the full development of the unconditioned universal that has nothing extraneous confronting it.

Second, what is inner difference, how is it connected to the infinite, and can it also be seen as figuring in the completed development of the unconditioned universal? Inner difference is at hand when something, in being itself, is nevertheless different from itself, is nevertheless differentiated or self-differentiating. What has inner difference does not have this difference due to something outside itself. The connection of inner difference with the infinite should be obvious. The infinite, as not limited but still determinate, has a determinacy that does not depend upon anything else. The infinite thus has precisely what inner difference involves. Moreover, both the infinite and inner difference, having differentiation independent of otherness, could be said to provide the unconditioned universal with a proper realization.

Life comes up in this connection as well. The life process, as actively self-sustaining, is continually generating difference within itself. What is alive has a self-renewing, self-engendered process, and process involves change. The change of the living organism is such that, while engendering



continual change, it remains what it is. This is because to be alive is to be engaged in metabolic process, in which the material of the organism is being changed and only thereby allows the dynamic unity of the organism to maintain itself. Life is at one with itself precisely by becoming other to itself.

How, then, does all this, infinity, inner difference, and life, become associated with self-consciousness, which the entire shape of consciousness as understanding ushers in? In paragraphs 163 and 164, Hegel describes how the shape of self-consciousness exhibits internal difference, even identifying self-consciousness as the distinguishing of the non-differentiated. To be self-conscious, consciousness must distinguish itself from itself and have itself as its object. Consciousness then distinguishes from itself precisely what is not distinct from itself but at one with itself. I am not self-consciousness unless I distinguish myself from myself as an object for myself, and yet this object is myself. So what is distinguished from me as an object is no less not distinguished. In consciousness being self-same, being for itself, there is differentiation, but differentiation that is inner-difference.

Obviously, the differentiation of what is not distinguished, inner difference, the infinite, life, and self-consciousness all come into connection through the closing development of consciousness as understanding. We need to observe how the experience of the second law of appearances with its inverted world confronts consciousness with these factors, presenting consciousness with something that really is going to take the form of itself.

Of the three successive terms that come up at the end of the observation of understanding—the first being infinity, the second being life, and the third being self-consciousness—it is infinity that comes into play first. This occurs once explanation brings into the domain of the supersensible the kind of flux that previously had been encountered in sensible appearance as it opposed its governing law.

Now law itself has a differentiation that has to be brought into unity with its own pure oneness. Explanation engages in articulating the connection between law's unity and differentiation by invoking force, which operates upon the differentiated content of law very much as force previously operated upon the content that perception had delivered. The experience of explanation, however, ends up revealing that recourse to force as the ground of law's differentiation is tautological. There is no way to distinguish the force from its expression—in this case the expression being the content of law. This presents understanding with a transformed law, because, through explanation, law ends up with a differentiated content that is not really any different from that from which it is distinguished, and where its unity nonetheless immediately falls into a differentiation.

This outcome sets the stage for a new form of law, of the supersensible, that completes the experience of understanding. This emergent law now draws within itself the fluctuation that previously in the first version of law

had stood outside law. Initially law was the unmoving truth of the constant flux of appearance, but now law itself involves the fluctuation where its unity immediately involves a differentiation that is just as much not distinct from the unity to which it belongs.

The second law thus has two sides. It presents, on the one hand, the rule that what is self-equal repels or opposes itself, and, on the other hand, the rule that what is different ends up collapsing into unity or attracting itself. This twofold law is the presentation of the inner essence of appearance, but, as Hegel observes, this inner is equally something that presents an inversion of how things appear—where what appears is, in truth, the inversion of itself, where what is alike is really self-repelling and what is different is really attracting. This inverted world is not an other world standing over and against appearances. If it were, it would be finite and conditioned, confronting a beyond that is other than itself. Rather, as Hegel observes, the inverted world contains that which it opposes. Comprehending how it does that is the key to understanding how consciousness now confronts something infinite as its object.

The inverted world might appear to be a supersensible world opposed to appearances, presenting two independent substances standing in an external relation to one another: the sensible world and the world that is its inversion. Hegel instead observes that the inverted world is really an inversion of itself. It opposes itself to itself. The domain of appearance, which is in truth the opposite of how it appears, is actually a constituent aspect of the inverted world of the second law and not something beyond it. Appearances are part of the process comprising the second law.

This enables consciousness to confront an objectivity it now experiences to be infinite. The inverted world, containing sensible appearances as part of its process, presents consciousness with an objectivity where what is different is just as much at one with what it is differentiated from and where what is the same is just as much different from what it equals. This is the process of what Hegel calls “inner difference,” where the difference is equally at one with what it opposes. Such a process is an inner distinguishing, a self-differentiating within what is taken to be objective. Since it has difference that is not dependent upon relating to something beyond itself, it has no external limit, but is infinite, in the proper sense of not being a beyond of the finite (which would render it equally finite) but containing the finite within itself.

The process of inner difference has two sides, for it involves something that differentiates itself and in that respect repels itself from itself but, at the same time, does not go beyond itself. The differentiation or becoming other is its own development, its own inner distinguishing, its own process, not a process whereby it becomes something else. Rather, it is what it is in virtue of so differentiating itself.

Hegel presents this infinite process of inner difference as equally being life. Life will be developed in much greater detail in subsequent shapes of consciousness. It will be encountered in the beginning of the observation of the first shape of self-consciousness. It will also come up, in greater detail, in the section of "Reason," when consciousness has the shape of reason that observes given objectivity as life. As we shall see, consciousness as reason will then proceed to observe objectivity as self-consciousness, engaging in psychological observation.

At this juncture, not much is said about life, other than the suggestion that organic process is equivalent to what objectivity has been experienced to involve as exhibiting inner difference and infinity. Nonetheless, it is not hard to understand how the basic life process has a character conforming to what now confronts consciousness: a process that can be considered infinite insofar as it involves an inner distinguishing. The living thing is continually sustaining itself through an inner differentiation where, unlike a heap or any mere aggregate, the organs of the living thing have differences that are thoroughly determined by the unity of the organism, insofar as it is in virtue of their complementary distinctions and corresponding functions that the unity of the whole is continually sustained together with the well-being of each of the organs.

Consciousness confronts this special kind of unity, which involves a process of differentiation that equally sustains that unity, where none of the features of the organism are given apart from its unitary process. With this inner difference, the unity of the object is not a form that is imposed upon a given material, where the form is given independently of the material and the process imposing form upon it. Unlike an artifact, which is a product of the activity by which its form is imposed upon a given material, the object of consciousness acts upon itself, continually sustaining itself, just as much engendering and renewing the material as the form it has. Indeed, to even employ the terms of "form" and "matter" is no longer appropriate.

What consciousness here confronts is a process very different from that of force and its expression. The life process has an almost self-determined character that accounts for the differentiation it involves by both producing this differentiation and being at one with itself in doing so. This radically departs from how force posits its expression, which leaves very undetermined what its expression is. Even though force is that which posits its expression, what it posits is still left up for grabs. It is whatever is found in sensible phenomena. Further, the positing of force does not account for how it gets reflected in law, just as the positing of law leaves out of account the individuals to which it applies. Moreover, the specific content of law is not posited by what law is *per se*, leaving in question their origin, unity, and necessity. Life, by contrast, has a concrete unity that accounts for itself as a

self-renewing process. There is no longer anything essential lurking behind it.

In an important sense, the difference between appearances and what truly is has been removed. With the emergence of the second law, the supersensible has taken into itself the wealth of determinacy of appearances. Life presents this withdrawing of the distinction as an objective given with its self-sustaining, self-differentiating unity. Hegel, however, now introduces self-consciousness, which he here associates with the same kind of process. Like life, self-consciousness exhibits inner differentiation in that self-consciousness repels itself from itself and is thereby at one with itself. To be conscious of oneself, one must confront oneself as an object. The self, as an object of consciousness, must be distinguished from its awareness of it. Yet, to the extent that what one is distinguishing from oneself is oneself, that repelling has just as much been removed, for what is repelled is not different from what it opposes. The opposition of knower and object, which is generic to consciousness, is in this case an opposition that is internal to something that is confronting itself.

Although this process of self-consciousness exhibits the same kind of inner distinguishing as that exhibited in life, the experience of consciousness that takes it beyond the shape of understanding does not arrive at just consciousness of life, but a consciousness of a consciousness that opposes consciousness itself. That is, consciousness is about to arrive at its first shape of self-consciousness. It is easy to see that there is something in life, in the infinite process of inner differentiation that fits the mold of self-consciousness. Nevertheless, to understand how what concludes the shape of understanding leads to the shape of self-consciousness, we need to fill out the content of what has been observed.

Self-consciousness, abstractly considered, is a shape of consciousness that, as consciousness, involves a polarity, an opposition where knowing confronts something it distinguishes from itself and to which it also relates. Here, what consciousness relates to as distinguished from itself is something it comprehends to be not different from, but identical with itself. Consciousness is actually confronting itself, which might make it appear that there is no longer any confrontation. Yet there is still the opposition of consciousness. Moreover, it seems that consciousness confronts two things, itself and life. How can there be both, self-consciousness and consciousness of life? And if they are both at hand, what is their relation to one another?

Through the experience of understanding, which sought truth in an unconditioned universal underlying appearance, consciousness has come to confront a process that is at once life and the process of consciousness itself. In peering beyond the curtain of sensible phenomena, consciousness has encountered an inner difference that is nothing but its own movement, both as alive and as self-conscious.

Hegel presents this development in quick strokes, indicating that what consciousness confronts in the process of inner differentiation is something consciousness experiences to be equivalent to itself. Through the inverted world, the object of consciousness becomes something that could be globally characterized as the life process, which consciousness experiences to be equivalent to the process of consciousness. The object of understanding has undergone various transformations until finally it reaches this configuration, which is put under the global rubric of the inner difference, the infinite, and life. If it turns out to be what consciousness can recognize as being no different from itself, then it experiences that it is dealing with a very different kind of knowing than before. Although the knowing under observation remains a shape of consciousness, confronting the given, in doing so it must henceforth be characterized as a self-knowing.

It helps to look back at the whole process of explanation, whose movement of understanding does precisely what the inverted world involves. Explanation puts together things that are different and distinguishes what is not really different. Thus what consciousness as understanding does turns out to be equivalent to what it construes its object to be.

In this way, the experience of understanding confirms Hegel's concluding remark. Consciousness, he observes, in trying to get at the true essence of things by looking beyond the veil of appearance, discovers that what is there is nothing but itself, and that there is nothing to be confronted unless consciousness steps behind the curtain and finds itself.<sup>12</sup>

## NOTES

1. See Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1:216, 228–29.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 136, p. 81.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 140, p. 85.
4. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 558–71.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 145, p. 88.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 165, p. 103.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 150, p. 91.
8. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A148–A226, B188–B274, pp. 278–326.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 150, p. 91.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 152, pp. 92–93.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 157, p. 96.
12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 165, p. 103.



## Lecture 5

# Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness

### PART 1

In turning to observe the first shape of self-consciousness, it is important to keep in mind that every shape in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* confronts an object. Throughout the *Phenomenology*, Hegel employs the term “*Gegenstand*” to characterize the object of consciousness. He distinguishes “*Gegenstand*” from “*Objekt*,” which is employed in the *Science of Logic* in connection with the logical development of objectivity, “*Objektivität*.”<sup>1</sup> Objectivity, “*Objektivität*,” is distinguished from “*Gegenständlichkeit*,” the totality of the *Gegenständen*, of givens that stand opposed to consciousness.

The German word *Gegenstand* means that which “stands against” and, in the context of the *Phenomenology*, it refers to how what is for consciousness is something it confronts. Whatever consciousness is aware of is some given that stands against it. Consciousness is aware of opposing its object (*Gegenstand*), of being in relation to it, and being determined in terms of that relationship. The object (*Gegenstand*) confronts consciousness in the way in which consciousness relates to it, even if, in so doing, consciousness seeks to know what it is in itself.

When Hegel discusses objectivity (*Objektivität*) and objects (*Objekten*) in the *Logic*, he is referring to something that is completely self-sufficient. It is determined in and through itself, not in virtue of standing in relation to something else. In particular, objectivity and the object are determined in and through themselves independently of standing over and against a subject. They do not involve the polar subject-object opposition of consciousness. That opposition and the relation to objects (*Gegenständen*) will remain with every shape until somehow the defining opposition of consciousness is com-

pletely removed. Accordingly, when we observe the shape of self-consciousness, consciousness will be the object (*Gegenstand*) it opposes.

How consciousness can take the form of an object to itself is perplexing in general. How Hegel begins his observation of the first shape of self-consciousness reflects the challenge to be tackled.

From the start, he leaves behind a purely theoretical engagement, such as was at hand in the shapes of sense-certainty, perception, and understanding. The very moment consciousness is consciousness of itself, its relation to the object can no longer be that of a spectator who is completely removed from real interaction with what is present.

This is evident in the initial, minimal form of self-consciousness, which involves the relationship of desiring consciousness to its desired object. Consciousness's relationship of desire is not a theoretical stance. It is rather a very practical relationship where consciousness is certain that what is truly for it is itself, yet, at the same time, confronts something opposing it. What consciousness confronts is something that has the character that objectivity has obtained through the completed development of understanding. Namely, the objectivity that desiring consciousness confronts is life. It is important to keep track of this determination because what follows depends upon the objects as well as the subjects in question being very much alive. Their vitality is not a matter of indifference, but plays a crucial role.

The desire in question is not just any kind of desire. It might be better to identify it as appetite. This is because consciousness operates with the pre-conception that what confronts it is itself. Consciousness is certain that the object it opposes is itself, yet it equally confronts a given that has the independent living character that objectivity has been experienced to have. How then can consciousness be conscious of itself given that objectivity confronts it as something alive? The answer will lie in the consuming satisfaction of appetite.

In observing this first form of self-consciousness, we will see that in order for the knowing under consideration to desire the object and do what this entails to the object of desire, it itself has to be alive. Consciousness is not just going to perceive or understand, for, as desiring, it is engaged in something that requires it to interact materially and, more specifically, metabolically with the object. Instead of leaving the object intact, as in a purely theoretical activity, consciousness is going to be consuming the object so as to ratify its certainty of itself. That act of validation is not a theoretical matter of sensing or perceiving something. It is instead an active obliterating of the otherness of the object. This practical engagement very much depends upon life. To achieve a genuine removal of the otherness of the desired object requires that consciousness incorporate and assimilate it. This can only be done if consciousness is alive, is organic, and indeed, is an animal.



There are a lot of factors here at play. One can theorize about them independently, but systematically conceiving them is not what is at stake. Rather, what matters is that the object and the desiring consciousness be observed to have these particular configurations. Consciousness, as a living animal individual confronts a given living thing for which it has an appetite. As a shape of consciousness engaged in examining itself, desiring consciousness is concerned with validating what it is certain of and it can only do that in a practical way.

In this connection it is worth asking, how could the self be aware of itself in just a theoretical way? Could it just hold on to sensing, perceiving, or understanding to become aware of itself as its object? Would these modes of consciousness be sufficient to establish the object to be consciousness itself or does that require something that cannot be merely theoretical? Moreover, can self-awareness involve just the single self dealing with objects that are not selves, let alone alive?

These are systematic questions of philosophical psychology that fall outside the purview of phenomenology, which does not make claims about knowing as such, nor about self-consciousness *per se*.<sup>2</sup> As phenomenological observers, we must focus on what can or cannot be achieved from within the particular shapes in question.

Consider what comes before us in this initial shape of self-consciousness. To begin with, we have consciousness opposing an object that it confronts as a living thing and the relation consciousness has to it that will enable it to know its object as itself. The latter relation is a negative activity seeking to remove the independent otherness of this object, which consciousness can do by consuming and assimilating it.

This practical activity, which aims to establish self-awareness by removing otherness, obviously fails to leave an object confronting consciousness that it can know to be itself. The consuming consciousness may devour some particular object of appetite, but this act neither results in producing itself as an object nor removes the presence of other objects in a world that remains different from consciousness. Instead, consciousness finds itself once more confronting an indifferent objectivity that conflicts with consciousness's certainty that what is objective is just consciousness itself. This discrepancy is, of course, the very opposition from which the fulfillment of desire proceeds. Consequently, the consumption of the object of appetite only renews the situation where desire stands in need of satisfaction.

Accordingly, consciousness experiences the failure of its attempt to know the object as itself by removing the otherness of the object, treating it as an object of appetite. Consuming the desired object only leads to the discovery that there remains an objectivity distinct from consciousness. This experience sets the stage for another attempt at achieving self-consciousness, which abandons the negative activity of appetite. Here consciousness seeks to know

itself as an object by relating to something other than itself to which it is no less identical. That is, consciousness relates to another consciousness, confronting an object that is the same as itself. Whereas consciousness as desire could not provide any abiding objective presence for itself, consciousness can seek a positive resolution by engaging in a relation to another consciousness.

The question is, how does consciousness know the other to be a consciousness like itself? The answer, significantly, is not going to lie in a theoretical engagement. After all, sensing, perceiving, and understanding have shown themselves incapable of providing self-knowledge, even if they prove unable to know their objects as distinct from the self. It can thus be no surprise that consciousness's confrontation with another consciousness will be an active, practical relation. As such, their interaction will depend upon the participants both being alive, both being embodied in the world, and both relating to one another in terms of their embodiment. Their relationship will not be a theoretical affair, where they just go about observing one another and, on that basis, understand themselves to be truly self-conscious. That prospect does not even enter the picture and it is important to consider why that should be.

The basic itinerary proceeds as follows: first of all, we have self-consciousness as desire or appetite, which, on the one hand, is certain that objectivity is itself, but, at the same time finds itself confronting something other with the character of being alive. Then, the experience of desire leads consciousness to confront another consciousness in its attempt to authenticate its certainty that its object is itself. This will initially involve a relation in terms of appetite because the other consciousness as immediately given does not reflect its unity with the former consciousness. The immediate presence of the opposing consciousness does not allow consciousness to know itself because consciousness confronts a self that is other to it. That otherness must be overcome and that imperative is what brings desire back into play.

What ensues is a struggle to remove the independent otherness of the opposing conscious individual. This also involves both parties risking their own life as a way of overcoming the otherness of their material being, which differs from the pure unity of consciousness as an I. Just as the object of appetite, in being consumed, did not provide any abiding objectivity in which consciousness can recognize itself, so this life and death struggle of two conscious individuals does not auger a satisfactory positive outcome. Rather, the experience of this struggle makes evident that validating the certainty of consciousness requires a different relationship between selves.

At various stages, Hegel makes mention of a relationship between selves which would be totally reciprocal, where what one consciousness does to the other is precisely what the other does to it in turn, so that in confronting the other, each consciousness confronts nothing really distinguishable from it-

self. Everything is equivalent with complete parity between the selves and how they relate to one another. They do unto other as they are done unto. Hegel associates what he calls “spirit” with this sheer reciprocity, but this is not what is at hand in the entire section on self-consciousness. The relationship where selves interact in this completely reciprocal way does not figure within the shapes of self-consciousness. It will only emerge within shapes of consciousness that fall under the heading of reason and, more specifically, within those shapes that belong to the part of the section of reason grouped under the heading of spirit.

In observing the shapes of self-consciousness, we instead encounter a very non-reciprocal relationship between two conscious individuals who play very different roles with respect to one another. Consequently, we observe a shape of consciousness confronting another shape of consciousness which cannot be equated with itself. This discrepancy is what allows the interaction to be characterized as a master-servant or master-slave relation.

This relation of two conscious individuals is going to work itself out in connection with life and with desire, but very differently from what occurs first within consciousness as appetite and next in the life and death struggle of conscious opponents. To best untangle what this relationship entails, we need to revisit the initial shape of desire and observe how it leads to a relationship of one consciousness to another. After reconsidering in more detail the initial confrontation of two conscious individuals, we need to see how it engenders the non-reciprocal relation that follows.

## PART 2

In paragraph 167, Hegel introduces the new shape of consciousness, which is certain of knowing itself in the object. He here observes that this new configuration involves a negation of the former object of understanding, a negation that preserves aspects of that object, but does so by rendering them elements or “moments” of self-consciousness. Whenever Hegel talks of something becoming a “moment” of something else, the former loses its immediacy, its independent givenness, and becomes a constituent of the whole to which it now belongs and by which it is mediated. By becoming a “moment” of self-consciousness, the erstwhile object of understanding becomes something whose difference from consciousness is no longer regarded as having independent standing. The difference is now considered null in principle, even though the object as a distinct moment still has a content of its own that confronts consciousness.

This presents an opposition that has to be resolved precisely because the object should not be left distinct from consciousness. Insofar as consciousness here takes what is given to be in truth itself, if consciousness is to

validate this certainty, the object must have its given distinct content robbed of any independent being of its own. As Hegel observes, this makes self-consciousness a consciousness of desire, with a doubled object.<sup>3</sup> Consciousness confronts what is given as being in truth nothing that is really distinct from itself, but the object nevertheless has a semblance of being different. Accordingly, if consciousness is going to experience the object as being truly in identity with itself, consciousness will have to engage in overcoming this opposition.

The object has acquired a type of content due to the shapes of consciousness from which it has arisen. As Hegel notes in paragraph 167, the object, as sensed and perceived, has a sensuous manifold that gets further ordered alternately as a thing with properties and as matter and a passive medium. The object, however, as further determined through the crucible of understanding, has, as Hegel describes it in paragraph 168, has returned into itself just as consciousness has done and through this reflection the object has become life. What Hegel is referring to is the outcome of the inverted world, where the object's differentiation ends up being the internal differentiation of its unity, just as consciousness obtains inner difference (or infinity) by regarding itself as object to itself.

Accordingly, the object of desire has the more specific meaning of being a living thing. Consciousness, certain of itself as object, here confronts a living thing whose independence counts as null and should be annulled if self-consciousness is to validate itself. Consciousness must now show its object to be just itself and this requires a practical engagement. It will not suffice to repeat the theoretical manipulations of perception and understanding, whose own failures have led to this juncture.

What then is the real interaction that consciousness experiences? In paragraphs 169, 170, 171, and into 172, Hegel sets the stage by providing further descriptions of the life process. Most relevant is what he considers in paragraphs 172 and 173, where he describes how the life process generates the genus through reproduction and death, and then brings self-consciousness into relation to the genus process. At the very end of the chapter on understanding, life came into view in connection with inner differentiation and the infinite, with which self-consciousness was then associated. When consciousness found its object to have the character of life, it thereby confronted something that fit how consciousness itself operated, so that in confronting this object consciousness finds itself confronting itself.

Here, in paragraphs 172 and 173, Hegel specifically relates self-consciousness to the genus process of life. He describes self-consciousness as being the genus existing for itself. The genus, as the life process of reproduction and death, is not for itself, but when it is for itself, when it relates to itself, this is tantamount to self-consciousness. Life per se is not a genus that relates to itself, nor is life per se self-consciousness, let alone conscious. The

genus is described in paragraph 172 as a reflected unity to which life gives rise. The unity of the genus is different from the initial organic unity of the living thing. The genus arises as a result of the life process, as a unity of life that is predicated upon life.

This involves more than just the self-sustaining activity of the living thing, which is continually maintaining itself through an inner differentiation of complementary organs whose working just as much resolves itself into the affirmation of the unity of the whole organism. The genus process, as it refers to the individual organism, might be better characterized as its species being, since there may or may not be a hierarchy of species and genera. It is not surprising that translators often translate the German "*Gattung*" both as species and genus. What here matters is not that the genus be something under which species happen to fall, but that the individual organism acquires a species being through the life process of reproduction and death. In reproduction, the individual organism gives rise to another organism, whose being is mediated by another living being. This allows the parent and the offspring to exhibit a universality that was not already manifest in the parent without connecting it to some antecedent reproduction process through which it is born.

In *The Science of Logic* Hegel conceives how the genus process, or what here could be described as the species being of life, sets the stage for knowing.<sup>4</sup> In paragraph 173 of the *Phenomenology* Hegel follows a similar path, suggesting that the genus for itself, or self-related, is self-consciousness.

There are two things that stand out here. First, Hegel speaks about consciousness confronting a living thing and doing so as being itself alive. That is, consciousness is here a living thing that has for itself another living thing. Moreover, in relating to another living thing, consciousness is relating to the species being of the other living, both as manifest in the cancellation of its independent life and in consciousness knowing itself as its object. Hegel brings all this into consciousness's effort to be self-conscious.

To some degree, these points hark back to what happened in understanding, where the object for consciousness had become the life process, duplicating the fundamental character of consciousness's own activity and thereby confronting consciousness with itself. What is of further significance, however, is the reference to the *Gattung*, the species or genus, in connection with self-consciousness, understood as a simple, pure I. In paragraph 174 Hegel notes that the simple I is this genus and he goes on to say that it is so as the simple universal for which the distinctions are no distinction at all.

Consciousness relates to its own living being in connection to the struggle for life and death because there, in knowing itself as self-consciousness, consciousness becomes involved in affirming the indifference of the concrete content of its life, of its particular determinate being. In risking its life and threatening that of its counterpart, consciousness is affirming the indepen-

dence of its pure unity from the individual life process that is merely a moment of itself, rather than something essential. Does this not resemble the genus process insofar as the living consciousness knows itself in another life only as a pure I, an abstract subject separated through its life and death struggle from the immediate body of itself and that of its opponent?

It is important to get at how the I in self-consciousness here has the character of being a simple universal, in which, as Hegel observes, the differences between selves are removed, in which self-consciousness has a negative relationship to not only the other that confronts it as life but also to its own given, living facticity. To know itself as self-consciousness, consciousness must remove its dependence on that kind of distinguishing given facticity because its unity is one in which the differences do not have any substantial being of their own. They are to be shown to be "moments," inner differences whereby consciousness is at one with itself. To allow consciousness to be aware of itself, the life form confronting it must present the organism in its species being, as possessing a universality that, through reproduction and death, persists over and against the particularities of the single individual life. Then one consciousness can recognize itself in its counterpart, insofar as both have the same universal, species being. This prospect will have important bearing upon the life and death struggle that consciousness puts itself in, after experiencing the limits of consuming another living thing.

In paragraph 174, we observe self-consciousness as desire, regarding itself as what is the essence, regarding what confronts it as something whose distinct existence is null and should be removed. The desiring consciousness is certain of itself as a simple I, for whom any given content is null and not part of its identity. To know itself as such, consciousness must overcome the independence of its own objective differentiation. This involves destroying the independent determinacy of the object and thereby making this obliteration of the independence of the other present to itself in an object-like, *Gegenständliche* manner.

Nevertheless, Hegel observes at the very beginning of paragraph 175, consciousness learns from the experience of satisfying its appetite that its object has a self-sufficiency, contrary to what consciousness is attempting to prove. How does the very obliteration of the object establish its independence? Hegel points to a reversal, not unlike that encountered before in the solicitation and soliciting of forces. Desire is predicated upon the need for an effort to gain satisfaction by eliminating the otherness of the object. If consciousness did not confront an independent otherness, there would not be desire, nor the negative process of fulfilling appetite. Hence, instead of establishing the truth that what is objective is the self, the very effort to do so depends upon the fact that there is an objectivity that is not, at least not yet, the self.

In the end, consciousness cannot overcome the independent object that it desires. The process of desire satisfaction only produces the object all over again, together with renewed desire. By obliterating its desired object, consciousness equally brings to an end the manifestation of the overcoming of otherness. That overcoming has vanished with the consumption of the object. What has not disappeared, however, is the abiding world with the conscious individual and its other remaining objects. Consciousness is thus faced with the same opposition as before—confronting another object that is different than itself, yet taken to be null. Well, is consciousness just going to repeat this ad nauseam or is something new going to transpire?

Hegel, of course, observes that consciousness gives up the shape of desire. Instead of attempting to consume a living thing different from itself, consciousness seeks to know itself by relating to another consciousness in the very same predicament.

How do we get to this new second shape of self-consciousness? A clue is to be found in the remainder of this paragraph, where Hegel remarks that due to the independence of the object, consciousness can only attain satisfaction insofar as this object negates itself. As he writes, “On account of the independence of the object, therefore, it can achieve satisfaction only when the object itself effects the negation within itself; and it must carry out this negation of itself in itself, for it is *in itself* the negative, and must be *for* the other what it *is*.”<sup>5</sup> Hegel maintains that this is what renders the object another consciousness. Insofar as the object is a negation of itself and at the same time independent, it is consciousness. To clarify how the self-negation of the object and consciousness go together, Hegel invokes the genus again. Further down this paragraph, he writes, “But this universal independent nature in which negation is present as absolute negation, is the genus as such, or the genus as *self-consciousness*. *Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*.”<sup>6</sup>

The transition from desire to the second shape proceeds as follows: The abiding independence of the object of desire signifies that satisfaction can only be achieved if the object itself negates itself. Then the negation of the object, which renders it at one with consciousness, has abiding objectivity, for that negation is what the object is in itself. That is the positive lesson of consciousness’s experience of the failure of appetite fulfillment.

How does the self-negation of the object transform it into another self-consciousness? Or, how would another self-consciousness be an object that negates itself in a way that allows the other consciousness to achieve its satisfaction? And how does this connect to Hegel’s reference to the genus?

First, since the negation of the object is what unites it with consciousness, the self-negation of the object confronts consciousness with an opposing other that is identical to itself. Accordingly, another self-consciousness confronts consciousness with an object that negates its otherness insofar as it is

identical to consciousness. Further, the resulting relationship is related to the genus insofar as the genus connects a living individual with another living individual of the same kind, making manifest the universal genus or species being they both share. The object that confronts the desiring consciousness is a living thing, just as the desiring consciousness is alive. To the extent that both living things are conscious, they exhibit the genus relationship. Hence, from its very experience of desire, consciousness has discovered that it can only succeed in knowing its object as in truth being consciousness itself, if what consciousness confronts is something that negates itself as other and thereby is another consciousness.

The object of consciousness here has two sides. Although the object negates itself, it also at the same time has independence. It negates its otherness, but in doing so it affirms its independence as another consciousness in its own right. These sides go together, for in eliminating its otherness to the consciousness it confronts, the object affirms its identity as a consciousness. Consciousness thereby is of the same genus as the other and is also aware of the other, which is aware of it.

The parties to the relationship are distinct individuals, but as individuals possessing a common species being, they are equally each a universal I. As individuals, they are individuated against one another and they are individuated by their separate living being. They confront one another as living individuals, who have things about them that are different and indifferent to their species being as self-conscious I's. Their given individuality is unavoidable, for they could not enter into a relationship if they were not already differentiated. They are not differentiated in terms of being self-consciousness, because as a simple I, they are indistinguishable. They are individuated in terms of something that is external to that simple being and which must be at hand for them to confront one another. This individual living being has to be present if their ability to be conscious of themselves depends upon their ability to confront another.

The simple unity of the I and its living embodiment go hand in hand and play crucial roles in the ensuing relationship. In paragraph 177, Hegel begins observing the immediate relation of one consciousness to another. He points out that here we have self-consciousness really for the first time. Why was there not self-consciousness already in desire and the satisfaction of its appetite? Hegel points out that in such desire the concept of self-consciousness was not an object for itself. Instead consciousness confronts something else, a living thing, whose nullity was to be shown. Consciousness did not have the "I" as an object. Here, however, consciousness does have the "I" as an object, for it confronts another I. Nonetheless, it would seem that consciousness can only be self-conscious insofar as it confronts another I that confronts it in the same way. Their relationship ought to be reciprocal, since



otherwise, the “I” that consciousness opposes will be fundamentally different from itself.

As Hegel notes, this imperative presents us with the concept of spirit, of the I that is we and the we that is I. This involves a relationship that is completely reciprocal, where each party relates to its other exactly as its counterpart relates to it. This reciprocity enables the self-consciousness of one to be precisely of the same kind as the self-consciousness of the other. Then not only does each confront a consciousness identical to its own, but they know themselves to be universal in character. Each knows itself to be not just *a* self-consciousness but a *universal* self-consciousness. That knowledge of oneself as a universal self-consciousness is going to be endemic to spirit as it will later appear in the *Phenomenology*, but this is not what consciousness now has before it. Consciousness is not yet in a fully reciprocal relationship with another I.

Why this is so comes to be observed in paragraph 179, where Hegel begins to detail the ensuing opposition. Hegel very briefly sketches the two sides of the relationship. Consciousness immediately confronts another consciousness. The relationship of one to the other is not yet mediated by any activity. They just immediately stand over and against one another. On the one hand, consciousness, though self-certain, has, as Hegel puts it, lost itself. It has lost itself because, instead of confronting itself, it opposes another consciousness. To the extent that the opposing consciousness is immediately something other, consciousness confronts an object that it cannot identify as itself. On the other hand, consciousness at the same time sees itself in the other, because it is another consciousness. If consciousness is to know what it confronts only as itself, it has to remove the abiding otherness of the opposing consciousness. The question is, how can consciousness do this?

Consciousness here faces a difficulty similar to that plaguing the satisfaction of appetite. Namely, if consciousness were to remove the otherness of the opposing self-consciousness by obliterating the other living self, consciousness will fail to confront itself as an object. The other will be gone, but consciousness will have no self to confront as itself. It seems that consciousness cannot remove the other without removing all objectivity for itself, whereas if the otherness of the opposing self is retained, consciousness loses itself.

Hegel points out that the above description, given in paragraph 181, is rather one-sided. It simply depicts the one self-consciousness in respect to the other, as if the other did not act in its own right. The relationship, however, is such that just as consciousness can act on its other, so that other can act upon it. Given this double predicament, does the relationship allow either self-consciousness to affirm and know itself as opposed to fall subject to a foreign opposing individual?

In paragraphs 183 and 184, Hegel describes a relationship taking place from both sides, involving a reciprocity and equivalency of action, where each party relates to its other as the other relates to it. Here the parties recognize themselves as reciprocally recognizing each other. This reciprocal recognition may be basic to spirit, but it is not what is here immediately at play. As Hegel points out in paragraph 185, what we here have to observe is not this pure concept of recognition but rather how the recognition process appears to consciousness. What first is exhibited is the inequality of both parties, where only one is recognized and the other is only recognizing. Why is this non-reciprocal relationship what first confronts consciousness? Why should the relationship of self-consciousness to another self-consciousness be immediately such that one consciousness is recognized while the other does the recognizing without being recognized in its own right? Why, further, does the ensuing relationship turn out to be a struggle for recognition?

### PART 3

The immediate relationship of one consciousness to another is presented as a life and death struggle. How does this very practical conflict fit with the epistemological quest of consciousness to validate its preconception that what is objective is its own self? Why should that quest take the form of a life and death struggle?

Both of the parties to the relationship are concerned with acting toward their counterpart so as to remove what is other to them, thereby reflect themselves in what they confront, and achieve self-consciousness. Although this involves action with regard to the other, it equally involves acting with regard to that aspect of consciousness itself that appears to be external or other to its truth as self-consciousness. These two sides, one having to do with the relation to the other and the other having to do with the relation to oneself, are directly connected.

The active relation to other involves putting the life, the independent being of the other, in jeopardy. This attempt to kill the other might appear to be a replay of how self-consciousness initially came on the scene by fulfilling its appetite for another living thing. The satisfaction of desire aimed at removing the otherness of its object, just as consciousness now seeks to remove the otherness of its opposing consciousness. The life and death struggle of two conscious individuals does not, and need not, involve an act of cannibalism. Here, it is enough to end the life of the other, leaving behind a mindless corpse, to affirm the self-consciousness of the victor. This is because what requires annulment is the otherness of the *consciousness* of the opposing self, not the otherness of an unconscious thing.

At the same time, the life and death struggle involves each party risking its own life, since each seeks to kill the other. Accordingly, the parties are not only relating to one another to affirm that their opposing object is genuinely their own consciousness. By risking their lives they are also relating to themselves to affirm their independence from their living being, whose given facticity opposes the simple unity of each individual's "I." If consciousness were not to risk its own living being, its self-knowledge would be impeded to the extent that one's body is not just consciousness.

Yet, can a distinction really be sustained between consciousness and its living embodiment? Admittedly, in order for consciousness to know itself in relation to another consciousness, self-consciousness must be found not in what individuates one's body but in something that can be identified apart from it. Otherwise how could one find in another consciousness anything to which one could identify? After all, the bodies are entirely distinct. Moreover, a living organism need not be conscious. So consciousness and the living body can be distinguished and might appear immediately distinguishable.

Nonetheless, consciousness and its embodiment are inextricably linked. By striking at the body of the other, the conscious individual strikes as well at the consciousness it confronts. Similarly, by putting its life at risk, consciousness puts equally at risk its own conscious awareness.

This linkage puts in doubt the quest of both parties to the life and death struggle. Each party is in the same predicament, having to affirm itself in a way that jeopardizes not only its living being, but its consciousness.

What then, does consciousness experience as the outcome of this relationship? Is the experience just a repeat of what consciousness experienced in consuming the living thing that was the object of its desire? Two factors entail very different results: the risking of one's own life and the element of recognition.

In the abstract, several outcomes seem possible. First, both parties might end up killing themselves. Although that mutual destruction removes the otherness of the opposing consciousness as well as the otherness of one's own body, these achievements are a pyrrhic victory. Instead of securing self-consciousness, this negative result does not leave any abiding self-consciousness, let alone any consciousness to experience what is left. Obviously, this result will not satisfy the epistemological quest of either party.

Alternately, one party may kill the other, without sacrificing itself. Will this outcome enable the survivor to end up confronting an object that exhibits nothing but its own consciousness? As Hegel observes, this result rather does away with the truth that was supposed to issue from it. The death of the other, like the consumption of the object of appetite, leaves no abiding objectivity reflecting the consciousness of the survivor. Instead of leaving another self

that confronts consciousness with an object in which it finds itself, the other awareness has been destroyed.

These two possible negative results provide a lesson for any surviving consciousness that experiences the immediate confrontation of one consciousness with another, under the preconception of self-certainty. It is now evident that self-consciousness can only be achieved if the lives of both parties are maintained. Yet how can this be done without the living otherness of each obstructing the achievement of self-knowledge? How can consciousness uphold the concern for life and the satisfaction of desire on which it depends and also maintain its pure self-consciousness in its relation to the other?

The initial solution that consciousness follows consists in the forging of an unequal relationship, where the two aspects are distributed among different individuals who play different roles. One conscious individual fulfills the concern for life that is necessary for allowing consciousness to be present to itself. The other conscious individual affirms the truth of its unity with itself, as opposed to subjugating that to external factors.

Hegel presents what follows as emerging from the preceding struggle of life and death when the parties to the conflict realize that their effort cannot succeed in achieving its goal. Instead, one party decides not to risk its life as before and to relate to its counterpart in respect of this withdrawal from the struggle. The ensuing interaction comprises the so-called master-servant or master-slave relation, which has garnered so much attention among subsequent readers of the *Phenomenology*, from Marx onward.

How are these unequal roles to be identified and how does this relationship further consciousness's attempt to validate its certainty that its object is itself? Many people use this shape of consciousness as a springboard for thinking about all sorts of complex relationships, without concern for the specific project of the *Phenomenology*. Marx invokes it to depict the predicament of labor under capitalism.<sup>7</sup> Sartre, for his part, identifies this shape with love,<sup>8</sup> whereas, for Frantz Fanon, it represents the anti-colonial struggle.<sup>9</sup> Our concern should be to observe what exactly the roles of master and servant involve as a shape of consciousness that has emerged from the struggle for life and death.

We face, first of all, an unequal relationship resulting from the impasse of that struggle, which leads to the suspension of conflict. To retain the life that self-consciousness depends upon, one consciousness submits to the other. This submission is not just any relation of servitude or enslavement, nor is the correlative mastery just any relation of domination. Both sides remain determined in respect of the quest to validate knowledge of oneself through one's relation to another conscious self.

Desire once again plays a central role, but in a different way from before. First of all, the subordinate consciousness serves the dominating conscious-

ness by enabling the master to gain a desire satisfaction that could not be obtained without the mediation of another consciousness. This is not simply a matter of the master receiving something to consume, which would only renew the negative result of appetite, which left consciousness without any abiding self-knowledge. Rather, what here contributes to the self-conscious of the master is the ongoing relationship in which the master confronts the abiding activity of a subordinate serving the master's needs. This other is truly concerned with having its conscious engagement uphold the self of the master.

Two aspects distinguish this form of desire satisfaction through the subordinate activity of another. On the one hand, there is an ongoing, rather than transient satisfaction of the daily recurrent needs of the master. On the other hand, there is the active recognition on the part of the subordinate consciousness of the desires of its master. Together, these aspects contrast starkly with the limitations of the satisfaction of appetite and of the life and death struggle of two conscious selves. In the two latter cases, consciousness sought to validate its self-knowledge by obliterating the presence of otherness. These engagements in obliteration were predicated upon the independence of the otherness in question, without which no negative activity could proceed. Moreover, each had a negative result, eliminating both the presence of the other and the activity of desire satisfaction. The satisfaction of appetite removed its object as well as its act of consumption, just as the struggle of life and death undermined the objectivity of the self.

By contrast, the master-servant relation is an enduring interaction. It does not involve merely the satisfaction of a particular need for a particular object. Rather, it involves a universal satisfaction for the neediness of the master in general. The general neediness of the master is being satisfied by an ongoing activity, so the satisfaction is as persisting as that continued service.

Moreover, the service provided by the subordinate consciousness comprises an activity of a very different character from what went before. The subordinate consciousness is acting upon living things and doing so to satisfy needs of not his or her own but the master. Further, the servant's activity is not a particular engagement directed just at some particular desire satisfaction, but a universal, enduring activity directed at the other's need in general. The servant's activity is not an act of consumption, which was what activity first was in self-consciousness as desire. That activity was, of course, performed by the individual whose need was being satisfied. Here, by contrast, the activity directed upon objects is being performed by someone whose desire is not what is being satisfied. The subordinate consciousness is not consuming anything in its activity, other than means of production that contribute to the product intended for the master. So the servant is not consuming anything. Instead of obliterating the object, the servant is engaged in a formative activity, working upon material and giving it new form. Unlike

consumption, which obliterates the object of appetite, the formative activity must have a positive product, for the activity is providing means of consumption for someone else.

It is important to remember that this formative activity is directed at furnishing products satisfying the desire of the master. The labor of the subordinate consciousness makes artifacts in the sense of imposing new form upon given materials. The new form could be very formal, leaving the material relatively intact, but changing something else about its availability. For example, the servant could pick apples off a tree and bring them to the master. That may not alter the natural form of the apple, but it involves some modification that enables the object of labor to satisfy the needs of the master.

All of this activity is directed not just at the master's desire satisfaction, but at further enabling the master to know him- or herself in virtue of what is being done. The question that consciousness must itself answer is to what degree is self-knowledge achieved. There are two sides to be considered. One has to do with how the formative activity of the servant enables the master to relate to objectivity in a way that achieves a self-affirmation that cannot be provided by consuming a living object on one's own. A new situation has arisen, for not only is the master's desire satisfaction mediated by the servant's activity, but that activity allows the master to enjoy an abiding, persisting, enduring satisfaction. Thanks to the work of the servant, one satisfaction follows another, without the activity vanishing through its own engagement.

We must ask, what do these features contribute to the self-consciousness of the master? Could one say that the master now is in a situation, thanks to the servant, where the master can regard objectivity as something uninterruptedly serving the self of the master and, in that way, reflecting the self of the master back to the master? Moreover, is not the servant also recognizing the self of the master by acting in subordination to its enduring desire satisfaction? Has the master hereby won a validated self-consciousness for him- or herself?

To fully resolve these questions, we need to consider the other consciousness of the relation—the standpoint of the subordinate self. What is the servant's own sense of self? The servant has chosen to live in exchange for serving another self by laboring, by imposing form upon a material to make it consumable by the other. The servant exhibits in a separate shape of consciousness a concern for life, which the struggle of life and death has shown to be crucial for upholding self-consciousness. Aristotle had something similar in mind in describing the attitude of the slave with regard to life. Aristotle spoke of slaves being slaves of survival because they were not willing to risk their lives in pursuit of a good life. They were just hanging onto life per se and were only concerned with self-preservation, no matter what the quality

of life. Similarly, the servant is here concerned with life as something necessary if one is going to be in any way objective to oneself. The subordinate consciousness cannot dispense with life, for to do so would forfeit its own consciousness as well as its contribution to that of the master. Nevertheless, the servant's activity serves the desires of the master, rather than the servant's own. Admittedly, by abandoning the struggle for life and death, the subordinate consciousness has taken life in exchange for submission. That life presumably involves the servant's own sustenance, without which no laboring can be enduringly performed. Still, the formative activity of the servant is primarily for the needs of the master, which secondarily include sustaining the servant in his or her subordinate role.

It would seem that the unequal servant-master relationship would allow the master to validate the truth that what is objective reflects the self of the master. This is not the case, however, and, as Hegel proceeds to observe, the reverse ends up holding true.<sup>10</sup> The servant, rather than the master, turns out to be engaged in a role that more directly affirms his own self-consciousness.

Contrary to initial appearances, what the servant consciously does with respect to the master does not reflect the master's self. If it did, the relationship would end up conforming to the pure concept of recognition, where there is genuine reciprocity, where the parties interact in what might be considered an exercise of right, where each acts with regard to the other in exercising the same kind of discretion that the other exercises in return. Here, however, the master confronts a different kind of self, even though that self serves the master's desires. The difference lies precisely in that service. The servant is subordinate to the desires of another, whereas the master is not. For just that reason, what confronts the master is not someone of the same kind, but a self of a completely different character. Insofar as the subordinate consciousness serves the master, it cannot reflect the autonomy of the master. The servant cannot provide the master with an object that the master can recognize as him- or herself. By serving the master, the otherness of the servant is only ratified. Hence, the mastery of the master cannot validate the master's self-consciousness.

When we turn to observe the situation of the servant, we encounter the same kind of exchange of roles that consciousness as understanding confronted in the play of forces. Despite the master's seeming dominance, the master remains bound to his or her own desires while depending upon the servant to provide for their satisfaction. By contrast, the servant acts free from enslavement to his or her own needs by serving those of the master and in doing so the servant provides for his or her own needs as well. In both respects, the servant exhibits an independence that the master cannot match. It has thus turned out that the master is conscious of his or her own dependency in mastery, whereas the servant is confronted by his or her own independence in bondage.

Hegel presents this outcome as resulting in a new shape of consciousness that he identifies with Stoicism. We will need to consider why and how the working through of the unequal relation of recognition between master and servant should lead to a shape where only one self-consciousness seems to be in play. Admittedly, as Hegel points out, the shape described as Stoicism can be attributed to anyone, whether one sits on the throne or lies shackled in chains.<sup>11</sup> It makes no difference for this form of self-consciousness. Why this should be is our next order of business.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 705–54.
2. For a systematic treatment of these question that builds upon Hegel's own efforts in his *Philosophy of Spirit*, see Richard Dien Winfield, *The Living Mind: From Psyche to Consciousness* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 191–221.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 167, p. 105.
4. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 772–74.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 175, p. 109.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 175, p. 110.
7. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.
8. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Books, 1966), 319–29, 474–93.
9. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963).
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 194–96, pp. 117–19.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 199, p. 121.



## *Lecture 6*

# **The Freedom of Self-Consciousness: Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness**

### PART 1

Stoicism, skepticism, and the unhappy consciousness are what Hegel identifies as the remaining shapes of consciousness that take their object to be in truth consciousness itself. It is important to consider all these shapes solely with respect to the common epistemological endeavor that leads Hegel to group them under the heading of “Self-Consciousness.” To be true to phenomenological observation, we must leave aside any other aspects of what might be associated with the phenomena in question and focus strictly upon the self-examination in which each of these shapes of consciousness is engaged.

The first three shapes that self-consciousness took—desire, the life and death struggle of one consciousness confronting another consciousness, and the so-called master-servant relationship—were not simply theoretical endeavors. Nevertheless, they all developed themselves with respect to the problem of how consciousness can relate to the object it confronts so as to uphold its certainty that what it opposes is itself.

We have seen self-consciousness first arise out of understanding, where what consciousness came to confront behind the curtain of appearance was an infinite process of internal differentiation that turned out to be equivalent to the activity consciousness itself engages in in seeking to understand phenomena. In thus finding itself before an object with the inner difference of life, consciousness no less confronted itself.

Self-consciousness, however, is a form of consciousness. It still contains a polarity, an opposition to something distinct from consciousness itself. So even though consciousness found itself confronting something that had the same internal differentiation as itself, something that could be considered alive, consciousness faced the problem of how it could uphold its consciousness of self in relation to that object.

One might wonder whether this account of the emergence of the first shape of self-consciousness presumes that all objectivity be regarded as alive. Could that possibly make sense? Can there be life without anything inorganic? This quandary is not quite relevant, because what lies at stake in consciousness's attempt to validate its certainty of self is not whether everything it might confront is alive, but whether life as an object enters into the standpoint of self-consciousness. If consciousness were to relate to something it does not take to be alive, it would revert back to a form of consciousness, be it sense-certainty or perception or understanding. What is important is that consciousness relate to an object such that consciousness's relationship to it can validate its certainty that what it is confronting is itself. Consciousness can only do so through the specific activity that depends upon its own living presence—namely, the process of assimilating a living thing that is an object of appetite. Then, however, this whole process undermines itself. Though the satisfaction of appetite destroys the otherness of the living thing it desires, it thereby extinguishes the process whereby its unification with the object was to be achieved, without leaving behind any objectification of itself. Consciousness as desire effects a negation that is entirely negative in character, providing no positive remain in which consciousness might find itself. Indeed, the whole process of desire satisfaction is dependent upon the presence of something other, without which desire has nothing to engage. Moreover, given appetite's consuming character, its satisfaction cannot help but renew the problem with which it began.

This outcome leaves consciousness in its quest to be self-conscious having to confront something that, on the one hand, is to be identified with itself, but is equally independent. This signifies that consciousness confront an object that comprises another consciousness, which is identical to it but no less distinct. The immediate confrontation of consciousness with another consciousness contains an element of difference lying in the individual life of the other as well as in consciousness's own individual living being. Both involve contents that are not reducible to the shared self-relation of self-consciousness. Although self-consciousness cannot be had apart from life, one's own life still has a character that is independent of self-consciousness itself. This is exhibited by how one can be alive and not be self-conscious, be it due to sleep, momentary unconsciousness, or a lapse into a comatose state. Moreover, every self-consciousness's living body has a unique individual reality, with a history of its own, that distinguishes it from every other.

In both respects the unity of self and object is problematic, preventing one from successfully confronting oneself in confronting another. How then can consciousness relate to this other self so as to know it to be at one with consciousness?

The answer cannot consist in a purely theoretical endeavor, since that would take consciousness back to sense-certainty, perception, or understanding. The solution, however, cannot lie in recourse to appetite. If securing identity lay in just consuming the other, there would be no need of confronting another consciousness, since all that is at stake is removing otherness *per se*. Of course, any return to appetite would only renew the difficulties that led consciousness to leave appetite behind and confront another consciousness. Accordingly, consciousness now faces the challenge of overcoming the otherness of the other consciousness, without canceling its conscious presence.

What immediately differentiate the opposing conscious selves are their respective living embodiments. The difference between the two selves revolves around the living presence of each, which cannot be removed without undermining the form of consciousness they share. Any attempt to remove what is not reducible to identity, what does not reflect consciousness in the opposing self, undermines the sought after identification by obliterating awareness as a whole.

Consequently, both sides must be upheld, the identity of consciousness with itself and the individuality of life. Both are essential to the validation of self-consciousness. Yet how can they both be affirmed as essential? If consciousness honors the distinct life of the other self, it confronts a consciousness with a given character essentially different from its own, undercutting self-identification. To escape this discrepancy, consciousness parceled out each aspect separately between the two participants in the relation. The outcome of that non-reciprocal recognition process of master-servant has led to a shape involving a relationship of a single subject to what it confronts, rather than a particular relationship between selves. In fact, the shape of consciousness that has emerged operates irrespective of what relations to other with which it might be encumbered. For the validation of the self-consciousness of this shape, it does not matter if one is in chains or occupying a throne. The certainty of self is here completely indifferent to any particular engagement.

This consciousness confronts its object to know it essentially to be consciousness itself, but without engaging in any of the non-theoretical activity of the three preceding forms. Consciousness no longer focuses upon the satisfaction of appetite, with its negative annihilation of the object, nor does it enter into a life and death struggle with another self, nor does it seek the certainty of itself in dominating or serving another. Instead, consciousness now exercises thinking to confirm that what it confronts is itself.

Our first task is to comprehend how this thinking emerges from the practical relationship of master and servant that immediately precedes it. The new

shape of consciousness, that Hegel calls stoicism, finds itself in the object it opposes by thinking what it confronts, putting the given individuality of the object into the form of thought. Here consciousness regards as essential what is thinkable in its object, treating as inessential what is independent of thought. By so doing, consciousness aims to validate its certainty, regarding what is genuinely objective to be what is at one with itself by being absorbed within the universality of conscious thought.

Where does this endeavor come from? How does consciousness make stoicism its own as a result of passing through the crucible of the master-servant relationship?

In observing the master-servant interaction, Hegel locates the source of inversion in what happens to the servant. The master does not get very far in validating its own self-knowledge by getting the servant to submit to its desires. This is because the servant, in submitting to the master's desires, does not duplicate the self of the master, but remains a very different subaltern. Secondly, the master proves to be dependent upon the servant, dependent upon something other. By contrast, the servant acts in independence of the servant's own desires and produces an ongoing abiding satisfaction of desire. How does this enable consciousness to take on a new form deserving to be called stoicism?

First of all, what the stoic does is something that can be pursued by a slave. There is nothing about being a slave that prevents one from being a stoic, because the thinking engagement that stoicism involves is indifferent to the worldly activity of servitude. This indifference, however, does not put stoicism in any special relation with the consciousness of the slave.

At the end of the observation of the master-servant relation, Hegel pointed out that, although the servant is subject to the will of the master, the master is actually dependent upon the servant. Just as soliciting and solicited forces exchanged roles, so the servant turns out to be the master of the master insofar as the master ends up being bound to the servant. This exchange of roles presents an equalization that then appears to leave us with one form of consciousness, which both master and servant turn out in truth to be.

Such a single outcome might seem precluded since what the servant does is hardly equivalent to what the master does. The master does not become just what the servant is, because the servant is engaged in a very different formative activity. In this formative activity, the servant leaves an abiding imprint, rather than obliterating the object, as in the consumption of appetite.

Is this formative activity what provides the bridge to stoicism? The stoic consciousness does seem engaged in making itself objective to itself by putting a form upon everything it confronts. The form it imposes, however, is not imposed upon material in the way in which the labor of the servant gives its object a new tangible form. The stoic rather imposes the form of thought upon its object by thinking it, leaving its physical reality intact.

The kind of form imposed in laboring always has a particular character. It is always rooted in some particular function, responding to some particular need. In this case, the need in question is that of the master. Still, Hegel points to something else essential to the specifically liberating role of the formative activity in which the servant engages. Namely, the laboring of the servant is not for the sake of the servant's own needs or desires. Since the formative activity of the servant is independent of the servant's own desires, it imposes a form upon objectivity that is not related to the living individuality of the laborer in any particular aspect. The work undertaken by the servant is rather informed by a fear of death insofar as the servant submits to the master to avoid death. The concern of the servant is not directed on any specific thing or need, but involves the entirety of the servant's existence. The concern is thus a universal concern.

Of key importance is that the negating performed by the servant in altering the form of the material does not have any particular import or any particular concern. It is a more general undertaking, indifferent to any particular concern of life, even though it may be concerned with life itself. The experience of consciousness has, after all, shown life to be something essential that cannot be thrown away if one wants to secure and maintain the reality of self-consciousness.

Here, then, we have an engagement where consciousness imposes a form on objectivity that reflects the self in a way that is universal and not particular. This formative activity is not tied to the individual desires of the servant and it is done out of a fear of death that, as Hegel notes, shakes the servant loose of the particular in every respect.<sup>1</sup>

Admittedly, the fear of death itself does not provide any positive embodiment to the unity of the self in general. Combined, however, with the servant's negating of objectivity, it contributes to an abiding means of satisfaction that has a universal character, as well as a universal motivation. This allows for the production of an objectivity that reflects a self that is abstract, a self that has detached itself from any particular concerns.

Such are the factors that Hegel observes providing a bridge to a shape of consciousness that knows itself as objective by imposing a universal form upon what it confronts. That universal form is the form of thought, of conceptualization. So we find ourselves before consciousness as stoicism, a shape of self-consciousness that knows itself insofar as it reduces objectivity to the form of thought. Stoic consciousness thinks what it confronts and it regards as essential and true only the thought form it theoretically confers on its object. Everything else is a matter of indifference. This thinking of the object to the exclusion of what is particular about it is an engagement that can be undertaken irrespective of one's actual status and life activities. None of these tangible entanglements can perturb the stoic consciousness, for

whom only what falls within the domain of self-consciousness, of the activity of thought, counts as truly objective.

It is striking how brief is Hegel's observation of stoic consciousness.<sup>2</sup> We do not find a succession of different ways of fulfilling its epistemological quest, such as appeared in the observations of self-certainty, perception, and understanding. Instead, there is a single way of relating to everything that is given, whether it concerns other things, other individuals, or consciousness's own endeavors. In every case, stoic consciousness regards what can be put in thought determinations, that is, what falls within the orbit of one's own awareness, to have any real significance.

This attitude is foreshadowed, as we have seen, by how the labor of the servant, motivated by the fear of death, comprises a universal activity that is indifferent to its own desires and indifferent to anything particular. Now consciousness moves entirely into the realm of thought, engaging in what ultimately proved to be at stake in the activity of the servant.

Hegel observes stoic consciousness to be a form of self-consciousness that ends up undermining itself and giving rise to a skeptical attitude toward its object. How does stoic consciousness undermine itself? What is the inherent problem in reducing all individual givenness to the form of thought, whereby the self knows itself as objective by reducing everything to its own thoughts?

Stoic consciousness exhibits a freedom from bondage to the particulars of individual existence, a freedom manifest by consciousness removing itself from all externalities by putting everything in the form of thought and thereby dealing only with itself as a thinking self. Yet what should these thought determinations be? The form of thought, being indifferent to particularity, provides no basis for distinguishing what counts as a true thought determination. Due to this formality, consciousness finds itself confronting something alien to itself in the content of its thoughts themselves. All that consciousness has in itself is the form of thought, but this form is empty. There is nothing about the form that has an intrinsic connection to any particular content.

This difficulty engenders the standpoint of skepticism, whose thinking relates to the content of the given in a way parallel to how desire related to the independent reality of its object. Stoic consciousness experiences that its thinking of the given leaves its thought encumbered with a content alien to itself. To know itself in the object, the thinking of consciousness must eliminate that alien content. This is the task of skepticism.

To secure self-consciousness, skepticism overcomes the alien content of its thought by negating all particular determinacies that are advanced as being essentially objective, that is, as being rational, good, or normative in any respect. Skeptical consciousness uses thinking to destroy the independent validity of all the individual content it confronts. This negative theoretical activity follows from stoicism to the extent that the thinking in question is

formal, incapable of containing within itself individual determinations. So, if thinking is going to be the means by which consciousness is to know itself in what it confronts, consciousness cannot simply put the given in the form of thought—rather, it must obliterate in thought the content it finds before it.

Unlike the consumption of the object in satisfaction of appetite, the destructive work of skepticism is just done in the domain of thought. Here thinking sets about annihilating the individual content of what is put in the form of thought. Ordinarily, one does not regard skepticism as a form of self-consciousness any more than one commonly regards desire satisfaction, life and death struggles, or master servant relations as modes of self-knowledge. Yet here, in our phenomenological consideration, it is this epistemological task that joins them together as modes of consciousness in which the object is presumed to be in truth consciousness itself.

Skepticism fulfills this epistemological aim by devouring in thought all extraneous content, leaving thinking left only with itself and nothing else. This negative outcome parallels that of desire, whose real consumption of the object of appetite leaves no objective remain to reflect consciousness. Skepticism removes the content that is alien to the empty form of thought, but all that can be left is that vacant domain of thinking.

Like the thinking of stoicism, that of skepticism has to seek its content from outside itself. In both cases, thinking confronts a content given to it, precisely because thinking is formal in character. Unlike an autonomous reason that would generate thought determinations through its own self-determination, such thinking is a thinking confined to the opposition of consciousness, always confronting a given. For just this reason, if consciousness as a thinking endeavor is to deal with the given so as to commune with itself, it must annihilate that object in thought, just as desire did in living nature.

The same sort of limitations that plagued the epistemological enterprise of the shape of consciousness of desire here drives skepticism to abandon its negating of content in thought. In the case of desire, only the annihilating process of consumption exhibited the objective presence of the self, but that negative activity consumed itself in consuming the object of appetite, leaving consciousness once again opposed to an alien objectivity. Moreover, even while the process of consumption was going on, the activity of the self remained dependent upon the independent existence of what it consumes, since without the abiding existence of the object, there would be nothing to annihilate.

Something very similar transpires in the experience of skepticism. This predicament is reflected in the practice of the ancient skeptics. The ancient skeptics, as classically represented by Sextus Empiricus, distinguished their practice from that of the “academics,” who went around claiming that they knew that there can be no knowledge. This view, which obviously undercuts the authority of its own denial of knowledge, is commonly confused with

skepticism. The ancient skeptics, however, do not lay claim to any final knowledge that knowing is impossible. Instead, they engage in a practice that they understand to be an ever-continuing occupation. The activity of the skeptic is not something that can ever be gotten beyond. Instead of arriving at a tranquil suspension of all judgment once and for all, the skeptic remains engaged in calling into question given normative claims, which always continue to be made so long as there is a consciousness with sensations, perceptions, understandings, and the power to judge. Otherwise, there is nothing left for the skeptic to do. If the skeptic succeeded in annihilating all normative claims, there would be no occasion for its thinking. There would then be no presence of the self as a thinking self. The activity of skepticism is rather always parasitic upon some judgments that are to be put into suspension by showing that there are equal arguments on both sides of the matter. That means that skepticism always confronts some given material and has to continue to confront it to be able to exercise its defining negating activity. Although skepticism is always directed at eliminating the given content of thought, it can never quite remove all such extraneous content. If it did, it would remove itself as well, leaving no self-knowledge behind. This is why the ancient skeptics recognize skepticism to be an endless enterprise, with no final resolution. In effect, skepticism must acknowledge that the very content it treats as unessential is essential to the skeptical endeavor.

The whole enterprise of skepticism thus turns out to be an awareness of its own futility. The skeptical consciousness aims to become a pure consciousness, knowing itself by purging itself of all particular given content, but it ends up experiencing that it is continually occupied with the very particularities of which it seeks to rid itself. This resulting dual awareness provides for a new shape of self-consciousness that Hegel identifies as the unhappy consciousness.

Unlike the stoic and skeptical shapes of consciousness, that of the unhappy consciousness develops into three successive configurations. The first involves a relation between consciousness and a distinct pure consciousness, the second pursues that relation in connection to desire and laboring, and the third develops that relation into one of consciousness to itself. All of these configurations involve a consciousness that seeks to unite two forms of consciousness in order to achieve self-knowledge. Throughout, consciousness is certain that it must become one with another shape to be at one with itself and confront what is genuinely true.

The two shapes are differentiated in terms of the two aspects with which skeptical consciousness found itself encumbered. On the one hand, there is an unchangeable, essential consciousness and, on the other hand, there is an individual, changing, inessential consciousness, which is aware of itself and the pure consciousness with which it seeks to unite. The latter is thus aware



of both shapes, regarding the essential consciousness as that with which it must become one in order to be conscious of its own true self.

This dual relation is the direct outcome of the shape of skepticism. Skepticism gives rise to the unhappy consciousness because the skeptical consciousness attempts to achieve a purified, stable, inactive self that has accomplished the removal of all particular, contingent, and variable contents from its thinking, while remaining caught up with an awareness of what is inessential and particular. Skepticism involved both aspects, despite its own strivings. It was a consciousness closing with itself by excluding all such content from itself, as well as a consciousness that perennially attends to all this content, even while ever trying to transcend it. That dual predicament gives us the fundamental recipe of the unhappy consciousness. The unhappy consciousness is aware of another consciousness that does not contain individuality in all its flux, another consciousness in unity with which it can be aware of its true self. Yet to achieve that unification, it must overcome its own contingent individuality, of which it is equally aware. This consciousness is unhappy insofar as it is aware of having to overcome a difference that is, nevertheless, built into itself. The unhappy consciousness is thus fated to seek unification with a form of consciousness that is such that the hope of achieving unity may ultimately be hopeless.

The whole drift of what follows is that the travails of the unhappy consciousness lead to the threshold of the third and last major division of the *Phenomenology*, all of whose remaining shapes fall under the heading of "reason." Hegel will introduce reason as a type of consciousness at the very conclusion of the observation of the unhappy consciousness. There reason will be identified as involving a consciousness that knows its own individuality to be the truth of all objectivity, so that in confronting all objectivity it will be confronting itself in its own individuality.

One might wonder, what does this have to do with reason, or at least with reason taken as a shape of consciousness? How is it fundamentally different from self-consciousness? We will encounter the keys for answering these questions as we begin observing the shapes that follow the unhappy consciousness. It will be important to keep in mind that the entire remainder of the *Phenomenology* will be occupied with observing shapes of consciousness that are characterized as reason. At a certain stage, however, the shapes will be further qualified as forms of "spirit," a term that will figure so prominently that phenomenology will warrant the title of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. This will occur even though spirit falls under the heading of reason. Why this should be so remains to be seen.

Our task at present is to follow out the whole succession of shapes of the unhappy consciousness and to see how we are led beyond self-consciousness to a shape of consciousness worthy of being identified with reason.

## PART 2

The two sides of skeptical consciousness lead to a divided consciousness that is aware of both the two aspects, regarding one as itself and the other as its true essence, with which it should be united to know itself in truth. The question is, how is this consciousness, on its own terms, going to achieve that unification? How is it going to know itself as having its truth in this other consciousness?

In the old Bailey translation of the *Phenomenology*,<sup>3</sup> the translator loads this section with footnotes that refer to developments in the history of Christianity, such as the Crusades, implying that Hegel's observation of the unhappy consciousness is about these matters. Admittedly, the observation of the unhappy consciousness presents material that seems to parallel central aspects of Christian religion and its history. Hegel himself, however, does not even use the term "divine" or anything of the sort in this section. Much later in the *Phenomenology* we will encounter a series of shapes of consciousness grouped together in a section entitled "Religion" that comprise distinct forms of religion. Here in the observation of the unhappy consciousness, there is no specific reference to religion.

One thus might ask whether the transcendent consciousness needs to be construed as divine. Could the essential consciousness be something else, such as a state? Admittedly, a state might not possess a natural consciousness, but it has an agency animated by its citizens, such that Plato can characterize the unity of polis as being analogous to the unity of the soul, and Hobbes can describe the state as a Leviathan, modeled after an individual. What precludes a political construal of the essential consciousness is rather how the latter is a pure consciousness separate from all the particular content of worldly existence. This supersensible abstraction reflects what happened in skeptical consciousness, which sought to remove all of the determinacy of the given, which was not intrinsic to the form of the thought. Such negative thinking produced a kind of consciousness that transcends everything worldly and determinate, in opposition to the living consciousness that is aware of being immersed in that mundane reality. Strictly speaking, the terms of the argument do not distinguish the two conscious standpoints other than as being inessential and essential, the former being finite, changing, and immersed in the world, and the latter being pure, unchanging, and infinite.

Nonetheless, the unhappy consciousness seems to involve a kind of religious awareness, given its relation to a pure essential consciousness with which it seeks to unite, even though it itself is encumbered with particularity. Is this enough to be a religious attitude, let alone one that is specific to Christianity? Is it sufficient to distinguish between essential and inessential for there to be something of religious resonance? After all, earlier in observing consciousness as understanding we came across talk of the essential and

the inessential. Moreover, for understanding, the essential was also held to be supersensible, in distinction from appearances.

Here, however, we have not just a contrast between what is essential and inessential, but two awarenesses that fall under these headings. The essential awareness indeed has a supersensible character, possessing a pure, unchanging essentiality that is beyond the world of the living individual, for which it comprises the truth. If the essential consciousness was identified with the divine and the relation of inessential and essential consciousnesses was held to be emblematic of religion, there would be no room for all those forms of religion that do not construe the divine as spirit, that is, as an immaterial mind. It might fit Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but not all those other forms that Hegel will allude to in the later Religion section.

Although this suggests that the unhappy consciousness may not be universal to religious consciousness, it leaves open the possibility that it represents a particular type of religious attitude, one that is involved with the securing of self-consciousness. It might be said that religion is generically concerned with relating to something transcendent that one regards as the absolute in which one is to find one's truth. For religion, then, one can only become conscious of oneself as one truly is by relating to this transcendent being. This presents a basic tension within the religious quest, for one seeks to find one's truth in something transcendent that, as such, lies irrevocably beyond oneself. If our true essence is located in such divinity, we have to relate to it in a certain way in order to obtain our true essence, for unity with what transcends us is not immediately given. On the other hand, the more the divine is like ourselves, the more it seems to contain our true essence. In other words, the less alien the divine is to us, the more likely we can find ourselves in it and achieve self-consciousness of what we truly are. Yet, as the divine becomes closer to what we are, the element of transcendence diminishes. Ultimately, when the divine is construed as a human individual, as represented in the Trinity, we no longer relate to anything alien, because we peer behind the curtain separating us from the transcendent supersensible and we encounter ourselves. Then we are ourselves the true essence and transcendence has been overcome.

In the unhappy consciousness, we observe an awareness of an essential consciousness that is still separate and distinct from the particular, finite consciousness that confronts it as its true nature. This involves a divide within consciousness. On the one hand, consciousness is aware of itself as a living individual, embedded in a world whose content is not reflective of consciousness. On the other hand, consciousness is aware of being in relation to a consciousness that is removed from all such externality, a consciousness that is essential, at one with itself, and offers the promise of providing the individual with that true being in which the self can be aware of itself and achieve self-consciousness.

The relationship that this divided consciousness has to the essential consciousness is not theoretical. It is not a matter of thinking that purified self. Thinking it does not secure self-consciousness, for, as the experience of stoic consciousness makes manifest, putting something given in the form of thought does not remove the externality of its content. By the same token, thinking away everything alien in its content will not work either, for as the experience of skepticism reveals, that negative activity cannot give the self a positive fulfillment, but only removes what is external, while depending upon externality for its own engagement.

Instead, as Hegel observes, this relationship involves devotion.<sup>4</sup> Devotion involves an internal movement toward the essential consciousness. This internal movement is identified as a type of feeling. Through this feeling, individual consciousness seeks to unite itself with the essential pure consciousness in which the individual's own true self is to be encountered. Self-consciousness is to be realized through this feeling of devotion.

How does devotion go beyond merely thinking of the essential consciousness and provide for self-knowledge? Devotion does not repeat the stoic thinking of what is essential or the skeptical thinking away of alien content. Devotion is the vehicle for uniting with a true, unchanging consciousness that is removed from the externalities in which the particular living consciousness is immersed. Hegel observes three ways in which devotion proceeds.<sup>5</sup>

One consists in becoming a pure consciousness consisting in the feeling of devotion. This does not involve taking the form of thought. If devotion took the form of thought rather than feeling the gulf between essential and inessential consciousness would be surmounted, removing the transcendence on which devotion depends.

As Hegel observes, thinking, unlike representation, completely absorbs the content of what is universal within the activity of thought.<sup>6</sup> There is nothing extraneous. With representation, by contrast, there is an extraneous element that allows one to wonder to whom the representation belongs.

Religion is not philosophy. Religion involves representation. Religion represents its content rather than consisting in philosophical arguments. Religion contains an element that has to be put into a form that is not reducible to mere thought. In religion, there is narrative, stories, something of a representational character. The religious relation involves something that cannot just be captured by thinking. The gap between the divine and believers has to be bridged in some other way.

To begin with, the unhappy consciousness pursues a way of bridging its internal divide without the individual entanglements with externalities that desire and labor involve. Instead, the feeling of devotion will be the vehicle for securing self-consciousness. How can devotion unite consciousness with something transcendent and essential? Can devotional feeling do this or is it

always going to be accompanied by an unhappiness reflecting how the object of devotion remains a beyond with which one can never unite?

Devotion relates to something supersensible. Consciousness as understanding related to the supersensible law, which was the truth of appearance. Law was the truth of sensible objects that were not yet identified with consciousness. Although consciousness ended up experiencing this supersensible to be nothing other than itself, it did not thereby relate to it as a transcendent other in which its own truth resides. The unhappy consciousness attends to the supersensible not by means of theoretical explanation but through the feeling of devotion. Consciousness now feels its unity with the essential consciousness. It feels that this is the truth. It cannot conceive that this is so owing to the divide. If consciousness could think its identity with the essential consciousness, there would be no gulf to bridge. The essential consciousness would be in the thought of individual consciousness.

Yet what is feeling? It is a modification of one's own awareness. Feeling, unlike sensation, is not the knowing of something else. It is just one's own internal modification, a state of oneself. In this case, it is the state of one's consciousness by means of which one attempts to unite with what counts for one as the essential knowing or consciousness.

That essential, pure consciousness is, for its part, shapeless and devoid of individuality. It is just a sheer beyond and for just this reason it seems to contain nothing with which unity can be secured. Indeed, the quest for unity appears to be a hopeless prospect about which one can only feel profoundly unhappy.

Still, consciousness can represent this pure self-consciousness, giving it shape. After all, to confront it as an object of consciousness, it cannot just be indeterminate. It must be determinately construed. As such, the confrontation with the pure self-consciousness has an immediate givenness. It is something that, as Hegel observes, just happens.<sup>7</sup> Consciousness finds itself confronting the essential consciousness as something with a given shape of its own. Such, of course, is the common situation of religious experience, for which the divine has some individual shape that is represented, a shape that may even take the form of an individual consciousness as in the case of Jesus Christ.

Why should the confrontation with the essential consciousness take the form of something that happens to the consciousness that comes to feel devotion? The other alternative would be for consciousness to do something on its own that could bring forth the divine and make it individuated and thereby accessible. If, however, the essential consciousness really is pure and unchanging, consciousness cannot bring it out. Rather, the essential consciousness is such that it can only make itself manifest to individual consciousness. So, instead of its presence being the doing of devotional consciousness, it is something that just happens to the latter.

A problem still remains even if the pure consciousness happens to appear in the form of an actual living consciousness, presenting consciousness with a miraculous occurrence consisting in the inexplicable individualization of the essential consciousness. This advent might seem to be the extreme development of religion. If human beings, or, more generally, rational agents of any species being, find in religious devotion a unification with their own true essence, then the religious quest obtains its consummating fulfillment when the divine appears in the form of an individual rational agent. Some familiar earthly religions speak of humanity being created in the image of the divine. The image in question of the divine cannot have anything to do with our physiological species being, since the divine is a pure consciousness. Species being is a matter of irrelevance, which is why the religious attitude can equally apply to extraterrestrial rational agents. Nonetheless, to be confronted, the essential consciousness must have a particular shape, which will involve some specific species being. Whatever that may be, its appearance puts the essential consciousness before individual consciousness in the shape with which it can most fully identify. Then, however, consciousness must ask whether transcendence has been obliterated. Has God died, as Nietzsche would say? Or, rather, must this manifestation itself give up the ghost in order for it not to become too mundane? This is the problem facing devotion insofar as the pure consciousness it confronts must have some given shape.

Hegel illustrates this difficulty in relation to the believer's encounter with the grave of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> The divine cannot be identified with that or any physical shape, without forfeiting its essential character. Yet it can only be related to if it has some determinate configuration. Accordingly, although consciousness must have something definite to encounter if it is to have an object of devotion, what it encounters ceases to be the pure consciousness to which it gives expression. Moreover, it still remains something distinct from inessential, individual consciousness.

Further, feeling cannot provide the bridge that devotion seeks. Feeling cannot itself comprise the unification with the essential consciousness. Because feeling is just a modification of consciousness, consciousness only encounters itself in its devotion. It communes with itself in all its given individuality instead of communing with a pure, universal consciousness. Consciousness thus experiences through its devotion that it really only encounters its own activity.<sup>9</sup>

This raises the question of whether there is a way in which the activity of consciousness can do the job of unifying individual consciousness with the essential consciousness in which its truth is taken to reside. Is there a way in which the individual consciousness can conduct itself that will secure unity with the essential consciousness? Is there a way in which individual consciousness can act upon the world in which it lives and bridge the gap? Is there any kind of work or, for that matter, any kind of desire satisfaction that

could produce unification with this essential consciousness and thereby allow us to achieve self-consciousness?

A second form of relationship must be undertaken because feeling cannot do the job. Devotion cannot succeed, and the unhappy consciousness experiences this by feeling the pain of not being able to achieve the unification it seeks. If feeling is insufficient, while theorizing only renews the impasse of stoicism and skepticism, are there works that could be done to bridge the gap between individual consciousness and the essential consciousness? When consciousness earlier consumed or worked upon objectivity for the sake of securing self-consciousness, it regarded given objectivity as a nullity that had no substantial being of its own that could resist the negating activity of self-consciousness. Now, however, consciousness is concerned with altering objectivity not to eliminate its otherness, but to unite individual consciousness with the unchangeable absolute consciousness that comprises its truth. That essential consciousness, however, is not just beyond the sphere of action. Not only must the essential consciousness take on some shape to confront the individual consciousness, but as what is ultimately true, it encompasses in that respect the domain of the inessential, changing, and particular world of living individuals, which cannot have any genuine reality apart from it. Consequently, what the individual works upon is not something fundamentally independent of the essential consciousness that it regards to be the real truth of itself and of objectivity itself, which is to be known as the self.<sup>10</sup>

This has fateful consequences for any consuming or forming of the world on the part of the living individual. If the individual acts in the world, it is altering that world, negating what is there, making it other than it is. Yet, what the individual acts upon is something consciousness equally recognizes to be ultimately determined by the essential consciousness with which consciousness seeks to unite. Accordingly, consciousness must regard any alteration it appears to achieve as occurring only to the degree that the essential consciousness allows this to happen. Whatever gives way to the apparently negating activity of individual consciousness only does so because the absolute consciousness permits itself to give way. Doctrines of divine grace represent something akin to this predicament, where we have to be thankful for any alterations that succeed in bringing us any nearer to the divine.<sup>11</sup>

Consciousness own practical endeavors to bridge its gap with the essential consciousness thus come to be experienced as having no truly independent efficacy. The individual's activity turns out to be a mere semblance, which does not achieve anything on its own. Whatever results is truly the work of the essential consciousness. So unless consciousness can presuppose that it is already in unity with the essential consciousness, individual activity cannot bring consciousness any closer to the essential consciousness in which it holds its truth to reside. All of the individual's endeavors turn out to be external, just as, inversely, the feeling of devotion turned out to allow the

individual to commune only with itself. Nothing that consciousness attempts to undertake on its own can produce the sought after unification, for any alteration is due to the essential consciousness, without any independent participation by the living individual. Consciousness may give thanks for changes it must ascribe to the essential consciousness, but the living individual must recognize that it has not done anything to bring it closer to what is essential for its self-knowledge. The very nature of the essential consciousness renders action as well as feeling unsuccessful options for the unhappy consciousness.

All that is left is a third option, resulting from how consciousness experiences its own activity to be estranged from itself. The unhappy consciousness was impelled to act upon the world insofar as the feeling of devotion left it trapped within itself, instead of bridging its divide from the essential consciousness. Yet, engagement in the world revealed that what appears to be the work of individual consciousness is not really its own. Beginning in paragraph 223 Hegel presents the remaining path for the unhappy consciousness to relate to the essential consciousness with which it seeks unification. Hegel observes this final option to consist in a specific way for consciousness to relate to itself. Abandoning engagement in external activity, individual consciousness turns to itself as the only domain in which its own efficacy can be manifest. The task is now to act upon itself so as to achieve unity with the essential consciousness. Yet what can consciousness do to itself that can produce the unification it needs to realize self-consciousness?

Consciousness has an individuality bound up with its own living being, bound up with its desires, bound up with its particular concerns, all of which separate it from the essential, unchanging consciousness that it regards to be of absolute significance. This living individuality of consciousness cannot be eliminated, for, as the struggle of life and death made manifest, self-consciousness cannot be achieved without maintaining the life of the individual. What is possible is for the individual to act against its particular desires and concerns without killing itself. The individual consciousness can restrict its desires, live a life of poverty, refrain from seeking worldly renown and satisfaction, and otherwise limit as much as possible all its particular pursuits that distinguish it from the essential consciousness. Yet all such efforts not only fail to eliminate living individuality, but comprise a preoccupation with precisely those worldly aspects from which the individual seeks to be free.

Hegel introduces a further avenue in paragraph 227. Instead of just restraining its worldly engagement, individual consciousness now seeks the aid of a mediating figure that inserts itself between the unchangeable consciousness and the inessential consciousness. Now for the first time, the unhappy consciousness enters into relation to another consciousness distinct from the transcendent, essential consciousness with which it still seeks to unite. This mediator helps connect individual consciousness with essential conscious-



ness by having subordinated its own living individuality in service to that transcendent self.

Yet what can this mediator do to or ask of the living individual that can facilitate unification with the universal, essential consciousness? This relationship is very different from that of master and servant, who just serves the master. Here, the mediating servant of the essential consciousness relates to another individual to unite it with something transcendent. Broadly speaking, what is at issue is the role of clergy, of religious mediators who help connect the faithful with the divine.

How do such intermediary individuals secure the needed unification? How can an individual relate to such a mediator and be brought closer to the essential consciousness? The turn to a mediator is understandable. After all, the avenues of devotion, works, and self-abnegation have all proven inadequate. Yet what does the individual consciousness do with the mediator to achieve what so far has eluded the unhappy consciousness?

To begin with, the individual opts for obedience to the mediator, to religious or clerical authority, so as to unite with the essential consciousness. This involves restricting the will of the lay individual in deference to that of the mediator. The individual's own attempt to discipline its worldly concerns did not succeed in achieving unity, so why should submission to the discipline of clerical authority do any better?

The problem with turning against one's own worldly engagements and pursuing asceticism was that it left the individual continually occupied with combatting all sorts of particular concerns separate from the transcendent essential consciousness, as if these could be of central spiritual importance. Will following the command of the mediator, of clerical authority, involve activities any more identifiable with the pure self of essential consciousness? In ceding independence to the mediator, is one not simply accepting as master another particular individual, rather than an unchanging, universal consciousness? Presumably, the mediator is not just any other individual. It is someone who is recognized to give authoritative counsels on how to unite with the essential transcendent consciousness. What warrants, however, such recognition? Can the mediator have succeeded in uniting with the essential consciousness through devotion, works, or ascetic commitment if those means have shown themselves inadequate for consciousness? If not, how can the counsels of the mediator provide a reliable guide for the obedient individual's "salvation"?

What ultimately matters is not so much whether the mediator is just another finite consciousness whose authority can always be questioned, or whether whatever particular counsels are offered can be derived from the pure unity of the essential consciousness. Of decisive import is whether the sacrifice of both worldly concerns and the independence will of the obedient individual can possibly provide consciousness of the individual's true self.

Can the unhappy consciousness's submission to the mediator allow it to comprehend its unity with what it takes to be its true self?

### PART 3

In paragraph 230, Hegel describes the object of the unhappy consciousness, as it comes to be determined in its final development as follows: "in this object, in which it finds that its own action and being, as being that of this *particular* consciousness, are being and action *in themselves*, there has arisen for consciousness the idea of *Reason*, of the certainty, that, in its particular individuality, it has being absolutely in itself, or is all reality."<sup>12</sup> What happens in the final sacrifices that the individual makes in obedience to the mediator achieves the reconciliation that consciousness has sought from the beginning of its striving as an unhappy consciousness. A reconciliation has resulted because the two sides, inessential consciousness and essential consciousness, now are merged. They are merged in that consciousness recognizes that in its individuality it is at one with the truth of all objectivity. There no longer is the divide that has been the basis for all the engagements of the unhappy consciousness.

This reconciliation will prove to be intimately connected with consciousness becoming aware of being fully rational. That is, consciousness will be consciousness of itself as reason to the extent that it recognizes an intrinsic identity between the contents of its own awareness and what is truly objective.

One might ask, what does this identity have to do with rationality or reason? If consciousness in its confrontation with the given is to take itself as reason, as fully rational, how would it regard the content of its own individuality? Consciousness would regard the filling of its awareness as being determinative of what is objective, rather than being in nonconformity with objectivity.

Hegel will distinguish consciousness as reason from the preceding shapes of consciousness by identifying the former with the unification of self-consciousness and consciousness. On these terms, consciousness as reason confronts an objectivity that it distinguishes from itself as does consciousness in general, but which it at the same time regards as being in identity with consciousness's own determinations. In virtue of this identity of its consciousness and self-consciousness, consciousness as reason can take its own determinations to grasp truly what confronts it as other. Having certainty of that identity is the operational presupposition of rationality, when rationality takes the form of consciousness as reason, which confronts the given and proceeds to think its true character. Such theorizing operates under the assumption that thought, where consciousness encounters its own self, will

have no problem laying hold of the given, insofar as objectivity is presumed to conform to consciousness.

We need to see how consciousness arrives at this configuration, especially since it might seem, in light of paragraphs 229 and 230, that the reconciliation being sought by the unhappy consciousness does not and cannot succeed. At least, in terms of how the unhappy consciousness has been operating, it appears that consciousness has not bridged the gap between it and the essential consciousness. In the beginning of paragraph 229, we observe the unhappy consciousness reaching its penultimate predicament, where, as Hegel writes, we observe how “through these moments of surrender, first of its right to decide for itself, then of its property and enjoyment, and finally through the positive moment of practicing what it does not understand, it truly and completely deprives itself of the consciousness of inner and outer freedom, of the actuality in which consciousness exists *for itself*.”<sup>13</sup> Consciousness has not only surrendered its decision by bowing to the authority of the mediator but has done what the authority counseled not on the basis of understanding and recognizing the mediator’s command to be rational, but of obeying the putative communications of a transcendent authority. Consciousness actuality is in no respect a “being-for-self,” that is, something self-related, because in obeying the mediator, consciousness undercuts its own individuality and becomes estranged from itself in all of the commanded sacrifices. The unhappy consciousness has allowed something outside or external to itself, to be determinative, so, as Hegel goes on to say, consciousness has a “certainty of having truly divested itself of its ‘I’, and of having turned its immediate self-consciousness into a *Thing*, into an *objective* existence.”<sup>14</sup> Consciousness has become an objective thing, because it has allowed itself to be determined by something else representing the essential consciousness. Here consciousness sacrifices everything regarding its inner and outer freedom. Is this total self-sacrifice the achievement of successful reconciliation?

Hegel goes on to observe that consciousness could prove the worth of its self-renunciation solely by this *actual* sacrifice, for only in that sacrifice does the *deception* vanish which lies in the *inner* recognition of giving thanks by way of the heart and by way of one’s disposition and one’s speech. In that self-renunciation, there is a bestowal of recognition that shifts all the power of being-for-itself away from itself and instead treats this power as a gift from above.<sup>15</sup> How does this sacrifice need the deception to vanish, the deception that was there by regarding what is going on as one did by giving thanks?

Hegel discusses this more explicitly in what follows, writing that consciousness, “in this very disclaimer, holds on to its own particular existence, does so outwardly in the possessions it does not surrender, inwardly in the consciousness of the decision it has itself made, and in the consciousness of

its content which it has itself determined, which it has not exchanged for one coming from outside, which last would fill it up with what is meaningless for it.”<sup>16</sup> This seems to contradict what was just said a moment before. To begin with, Hegel spoke as if the self has emptied itself of its “I.” This actual sacrifice has, nevertheless, made the deception vanish, a deception involved in giving thanks to the essential consciousness for bringing into effect whatever the self sought to do. Hegel speaks of the deception in the following ways. He says that the deception “lies in the inner acknowledgment of gratitude through heart, sentiment, and tongue.”<sup>17</sup> Giving thanks had to do with the second way of relating to the divine, where consciousness undertook works to unite with the essential consciousness and had to acknowledge those works to ultimately be the work of the essential consciousness. Yet it turns out to be a deception to think that what occurs does so completely independent of consciousness’s doing. This is now emphasized in noting how the sacrifice is something consciousness undertakes after all. Consciousness has *chosen* to obey the clerical authority. Consciousness has *chosen* to live in impoverishment. These are all activities one has undertaken, even though the whole point of them is to remove consciousness’s active engagement as an independent individual. That negating of oneself, that submitting to authority, is really something that consciousness has done itself. So the content of these activities does not constitute some alien being.

The sacrifice that consciousness engaged in under the counsel of the mediator was intended to eliminate the enemy within, the enemy constituted by consciousness’s own individuality, which is distinct from what lies in the beyond. Consciousness attempted through its sacrifices to relinquish everything that seemed to involve its distinctive individuality, yet it did so as an engagement of that very individuality. In this respect, consciousness has not achieved what it set out to do. It has not removed that individuality and thereby achieved reconciliation. Instead, the whole enterprise of the unhappy consciousness has turned out to have a further significance, which Hegel now outlines in paragraph 230. This significance emerges once consciousness recognizes that what has been done is its own individual engagement. Insofar as what has been done is just as much the determining of what is essential, the individual engagement is experienced to be at the very same time in unity with what consciousness regards to be of true and universal significance.

Hegel describes this outcome in paragraph 230 as follows: “in the sacrifice actually carried out, consciousness, having nullified the *action* as its own doing, has also *in principle* obtained relief from its *misery*.”<sup>18</sup> How has consciousness’s unhappiness in itself been purged from it? When Hegel says “in principle” or “in itself,” he is distinguishing that from “for itself.” The unhappiness, the felt lack of reconciliation, has not been purged for consciousness, but it has been purged in itself or in truth. If consciousness had succeeded in completely eliminating its distinguished individuality, then the

basis for the unhappiness would be removed. Yet, Hegel observes, “that this relief has been obtained *in principle* is, however, the action of the other extreme of the syllogism, which is the essence possessed of *intrinsic being*.”<sup>19</sup> Consciousness cannot help but equally attribute what its sacrifice has achieved to this “essence possessed of *intrinsic being*,” the pure essential consciousness. After all, the whole aim of the purging is to ratify that the truth of consciousness lies in this other pure consciousness. The realization of that truth is equivalent to consciousness sacrificing itself and renouncing any independent role to play. Then, what has occurred has happened owing to that with which the self is seeking unification. This was already recognized in the unhappy consciousness’s second attempt at reconciliation, where consciousness acted on the world. Consciousness had to recognize that if anything was accomplished, it was really thanks to what this true consciousness allowed to take place. Now this truth applies equally to the sacrifice consciousness makes. It is not just that alterations of the world are really not one’s own responsibility, but even the alterations of oneself are really effected by what one takes to be true and fundamental. This is the crucial import of this final attempt by the unhappy consciousness to act upon itself, under the guidance of the mediator. The unhappy consciousness must regard the very sacrifice it makes, whereby it eliminates its own independence and opposition to what has truth for it, as being something that is really effected by what it sees as the essence with which it seeks to unite.

As Hegel once again points out, “that sacrifice made by the unessential extreme was at the same time not a one-sided action, but contained within itself the action of the other. For the surrender of one’s own will is only from one aspect negative; in principle, however, or in itself, it is at the same time positive, viz. the positing of will as the will of an ‘other’, and specifically of will, not as a particular, but as a universal will.”<sup>20</sup> Surrendering one’s will is negative with respect to oneself, but it is positive with respect to the essential consciousness with which one is seeking to unite. In choosing to sacrifice one’s independence, one’s will is equally the will of the essential consciousness, a will that is universal, not merely individual. “The positive meaning of the negatively posited particular will is taken by this consciousness to be the will of the other extreme, the will which, precisely because it is an ‘other’ for consciousness, becomes actual for it, not through the Unhappy Consciousness itself, but through a Third, the mediator as counsellor.”<sup>21</sup> For the unhappy consciousness, the sacrifice of its own will turns out to be the act of the will with which it is seeking to unite and which it regards to be the truth of all objectivity. The act of giving counsel, precisely insofar as it mediates the inessential consciousness with the essential consciousness, ensures that forfeiting one’s own freedom and submitting to counsel is actually an expression of the will of the other extreme. Consciousness implicitly recognizes this in submitting to the counsel. In doing so, consciousness takes that coun-

sel not just as the command of a mundane master, as in the master-servant relation, but as the will of the absolute, unchanging consciousness, which counts as true objectivity. By way of the mediator, what consciousness does is the expression of the will of the transcendent consciousness, the divine.

Consciousness has therefore arrived at a turning point. "Hence, for consciousness," Hegel observes, "its will does indeed become universal and essential will, but consciousness itself does not take itself to be this essential will."<sup>22</sup> Even though consciousness now recognizes that what was its will was actually the will of the transcendent consciousness, it still cannot recognize that will to be its own. Consciousness still cannot recognize its immediate identity with it, because consciousness had to surrender its own independence in order to recognize its activity to be that of the essential consciousness. The transcendent consciousness is still not identifiable with its will. For as Hegel notes, "the surrender of its own will, as a *particular* will, is not taken by it to be in principle the positive aspect of the universal will."<sup>23</sup> The surrendering is what individual consciousness does, but surrendering is not what is truly taking place for it. The sacrifice remains distinct from the true import of the accomplished reconciliation. This discrepancy applies to the rest of what the unhappy consciousness does. Its relinquishing of possessions and abandonment of consumption likewise has immediately merely the same negative significance, so that the universal that thereby comes to be for it is still distinct from its own activity. In each case, consciousness renounces the individuality of its self. Even though this is supposed to be the doing of the universal will, its renunciation remains a distinguishable appearance of that essential doing.

Hegel observes that "this *unity* of objectivity and being-for-self, which lies in the Notion of action, and which therefore becomes for consciousness essence and *object*—this unity is not the principle of its action, and so too it does not become an object *for consciousness*, directly and through itself." What is this unity of objective being and being-for-itself? Any time Hegel employs the term "being-for-itself" he is talking about self-relation. The objective being comprises the whole domain of the sacrifice, all of whose engagements are in truth the workings of the transcendent consciousness. Since they ultimately occur on the part of the divine, the unity does not come to be an object for consciousness by way of itself. The act of consciousness figures as an extreme, connected to the essential consciousness by the middle term of the mediator. If unity results, it does so only as the *outcome* of that mediation, not as something *already* present in the extreme that gets connected through counsel. The consciousness of a divide in need of mediation is the starting point from which the mediating proceeds. As Hegel observes, the unhappy consciousness "lets the mediating minister express this certainty, a certainty which is itself still incomplete, that its misery is only *in principle* the reverse, i.e., that its action brings it only *in principle* self-

satisfaction or blessed enjoyment; that its pitiable action too is only *in principle* the reverse, viz. an absolute action; that in principle, action is only really action when it is the action of a particular individual.”<sup>24</sup> The unhappy consciousness is attempting to sacrifice its own separate being by removing its separation, but there is something one-sided about the solution.

Nonetheless, the accomplished mediation sets the stage for a new development, which will present consciousness as reason.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 196, pp. 118–19.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 197–203, pp. 119–24.
3. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 217, p. 131.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 210, p. 128.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 217, p. 131.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 212, p. 129.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 217, p. 132.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 218, p. 132.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 219–20, pp. 132–33.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 222, p. 134.
12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 138.
13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 229, p. 137.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 229, p. 137.
15. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, pp. 137–38.
16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 229, p. 137.
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 229, p. 137.
18. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 137.
19. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 137.
20. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 138.
21. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 138.
22. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 138.
23. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 138.
24. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 138.





## *Lecture 7*

# **Reason as Observation of Nature**

### PART 1

Our phenomenological observation has reached the point where the shapes of consciousness identified as self-consciousness give way to the shapes of consciousness identified as reason. The preceding experiences have not revealed what self-consciousness is *per se*. Phenomenology is not a systematic philosophical psychology conceiving self-consciousness as such. Rather, it observes what occurs when the stipulated structure of consciousness, where knowing is construed to confront the given, treats the given as itself. Consciousness takes the shape of self-consciousness by relating to the given as itself, whereby it is conscious of itself as an object.

To begin with, Hegel observed sense-certainty, perception, and understanding, placing all under the general heading of consciousness insofar as in those shapes consciousness confronts a given that it regards as being in truth something other to itself. Then, in discovering that what it takes to be other is really, in truth, just for it, consciousness took the relation of consciousness to be the truth of its object.

In those shapes of consciousness grouped under the heading of reason, consciousness will confront both construals of its object at once. Whereas, on the one hand, consciousness will be certain that its object is an other, consciousness will, at the same time, treat its object as having its independent being in virtue of being for consciousness. In this way, consciousness will take on a shape uniting consciousness and self-consciousness and consciousness. As we shall see, this unity will go through different permutations, just as had the shapes of consciousness and of self-consciousness.

What complicates matters is that these relationships get nested within one another. For consciousness as reason, the object reflects the identity of con-

consciousness and self-consciousness in the certainty that what is other to consciousness is other in virtue of being at one with consciousness. This unity is first exhibited, nonetheless, in an object that consciousness as reason confronts as something distinct from itself. Consciousness now presumes that the object it opposes will exhibit the unity between what is distinguished from consciousness and the relation of consciousness to it. Next, consciousness will come to confront its object with the certainty that this unity takes the form of self-consciousness. Finally, consciousness will confront an object it takes to involve both sides of otherness and self-consciousness.

This succession of shapes unfolds in the following terms: To begin with, consciousness as reason engages in the observation of what could be called nature in general. That observation of nature is then followed by the observation of consciousness. In both cases, the observation is an engagement of reason. Our task is to see how this observation is distinguished from sense-certainty, perception, and understanding, as well as from the various shapes of self-consciousness. On that basis, we can better fathom how observation here comprises reason as a shape of consciousness.

Hegel provides little in the way of an explicit bridge between the last shape of self-consciousness, the unhappy consciousness, and the first shape of consciousness as reason. In the final paragraph of the account of the former, Hegel tells us that the whole path that the unhappy consciousness has traveled to validate its certainty has ended up confronting it with an object fundamentally different from what it has taken to be its truth. All along, the unhappy consciousness has sought some kind of reconciliation with a transcendent pure consciousness lying beyond its own individuality. It has ended up, however, experiencing that, as Hegel observes at the end of paragraph 230, “its own action and being, as being that of this *particular* consciousness, are being and action *in themselves*.” From this experience “there has arisen for consciousness the idea of *Reason*, of the certainty that, in its particular individuality, it has being absolutely *in itself*, or is all reality.”<sup>1</sup>

Through the final workings of the unhappy consciousness, where consciousness has estranged itself from its own individuality, consciousness has found every aspect of itself to be the work of what is the essence or true. In divorcing itself from its will, getting rid of its property, and renouncing its own desires and achievements, consciousness has discovered that its individual activity is at one with what is ultimately valid. Through its attempt to achieve reconciliation through submission to the mediator, consciousness has actually made its individuality in its entirety at one with what for it is the truth. This outcome eliminates all the division and transcendence that has plagued as well as defined the experience of the unhappy consciousness.

Our phenomenological observation now enters a new territory, which Hegel begins to describe in the opening paragraph 231 of the discussion of reason. The emergent truth of which consciousness as reason now is certain

is found in the middle term that connected the individual with the absolute, unchanging consciousness. In that middle term the individual renounced himself in all respects, obeying the intermediacy authority, and came to recognize therein the work of what was essential. Thereby consciousness's own individuality was united with what it had taken to be something beyond it.

In pointing this out, Hegel provides us with his only hint as to how the transformation from self-consciousness to reason has taken place. We need also to consider what all this has to do with reason. Of course, what lies at stake is not reason *per se*, but the shape of consciousness as reason. Consciousness as reason is a shape of consciousness and, as such, it remains a knowing that confronts something given and operates with a distinction between itself and what it knows.

Nonetheless, the appeal to reason invokes a solution to the problem of how what is logical or conceptual can lay hold of what is other than itself, of how, generally, thought can grasp what is not thought. Reason is objective rather than merely subjective thought. The thought of reason does not lie over and against something given independently of it. If thought is to have any possibility of being true, of being genuinely rational, it cannot be alien to what is distinguished from it. With the outcome of the unhappy consciousness we have something akin to that objective thinking, but in the relation of consciousness.

Here consciousness takes itself to be at one with what it distinguishes from itself. We are not dealing with a self-consciousness that removes the opposition to what is other. The various shapes of self-consciousness achieved this in manifold ways. Consciousness as desire removed the otherness of the object of consciousness by consuming it. By contrast, stoicism, removed the otherness by putting its object in the form of thought. How then is stoicism different from reason? Stoicism employs thinking, regarding what knowing conceives to be what is fundamental, relegating everything else to a matter of indifference. In so doing, stoic consciousness avoided the practical engagements of desire, the struggle of life and death, and servitude. Why is the thinking of stoicism not a form of consciousness as reason?

Of key importance is that stoicism could not allow anything that it thought to retain a self-subsistent being of its own. What stoic consciousness recognized to be valid was only its own form of thought. Everything that had a being of its own apart from that subjective form was not to be taken seriously. This is why stoicism engendered skepticism, which directed its negative fury at debunking the validity of every particular knowledge claim. Skepticism thus sought to get rid of everything pertaining to individuality, with whose content any kind of separate existence could be associated.

Consciousness as reason is something else entirely. It operates with certainty of the underlying unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, a

certainty that provides the standpoint for theorizing. Theorizing makes use of thinking to get at what is not just thought. If one is going to undertake that task without further ado, one is presupposing an intrinsic identity between the knowing of theorizing and what is being theorized about. Otherwise, theorizing would be in vain. Accordingly, in theorizing one is assuming that consciousness and self-consciousness are one, that what confronts knowing as an independent given is distinguished from knowing insofar as it is equally something in which knowing encounters its own determinations. Theory and its object may be intrinsically connected, but there is no less a distinction between them. Theorizing only obtains truth by going beyond itself, yet in going beyond itself, theorizing is not really going to find anything different from itself. To the extent that theory truly grasps its object, theorizing finds itself in what it confronts. Yet, theorizing does not have to destroy what it confronts to do that. Nor does theorizing treat everything individual as a matter of indifference to the form of thought. Rather, as Hegel notes in paragraph 232, self-consciousness becomes reason to the extent that it no longer has this negative relationship to otherness. To be self-conscious, consciousness had to remove the opposing otherness, but now consciousness is just as much at one with what exists in its own right. For that reason, consciousness can have a positive relationship to what it confronts, where one can be at home with oneself or self-conscious, encountering oneself in what is other.

Consciousness as reason thus proceeds from the certainty that self-consciousness is all reality, that all reality is nothing but itself. This might appear to be just an affirmation of solipsism, where the knowing self reduces all knowledge to purely subjective self-knowledge, eliminating all independent otherness. Hegel instead speaks of the certainty of consciousness as reason being equivalent to idealism.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, Hegel remarks that all philosophy is, in a certain respect, idealism.<sup>3</sup> He is not talking about solipsism, but idealism. We would have solipsism if all we were left with was self-consciousness without consciousness of something else, a self-consciousness that is merely subjective, that is not at one with itself in relating to something that is independently other. Here, however, we have an idealism, where knowing is at one with all reality without reality losing its independent, essential being. Consciousness is now in the position of discovering the world as an actual world, in whose persistence, rather than abolition, it has an interest. Consciousness does not have to destroy the world to validate itself as reason. Consciousness does not have to consume it, nor does it have to act upon itself in any similarly negative manner. In observing nature, consciousness is not going to be estranged from itself.

This overcoming of estrangement is, in a sense, the doctrine of idealism. This involves a unity between the universality of thought and the individuality of the object of thought, which is anticipated by the sought after unifica-

tion of the individual with the universal consciousness, from which consciousness as reason emerged. In the following observation of nature, the theorizing of consciousness will employ universals to capture individual givens whose contents are extraneous to the universality of theory. This looming discrepancy is to be expected since with reason as a shape of consciousness, theorizing confronts a given that is distinct from its knowing. Consciousness as reason may be certain of the unity of its theorizing with the given it confronts, but this is just an immediate certainty. Accordingly, Hegel calls such consciousness an instinctive reason.<sup>4</sup>

Consciousness as reason operates with immediate certainty that it will find in what it confronts something that is transparent to its own self-consciousness. Here consciousness presumes that its object is in unity with its knowing, which means that in confronting what is other to one, one will just as much be engaging in self-knowledge. This certainty does not say anything about the content of the given nor, for that matter, about the content of knowing. These are both left undetermined by the immediate unity of consciousness and self-consciousness. Hegel expresses this formality in paragraph 235 by introducing a term that will figure centrally in the development of consciousness as reason. This term is the “category,” which Hegel introduces in conjunction with the observation, that whereas “reason is the certainty of being all *reality*,” the “in-itself or this reality” is still the “the pure *abstraction* of reality,”<sup>5</sup> which has not been further specified in any way.

“It is the first *positivity*,” something independent and object-like in which consciousness relates to itself. Here the “I” is only “the *pure essentiality* of the existent” or is “the simple *category*.”<sup>6</sup> The category is the unifying determination that “self-consciousness and being are the same essence,”<sup>7</sup> not two external factors that happen to be found in correspondence, but rather factors that are intrinsically the same. As Hegel states in the next line, the category is “the *simple* unity of self-consciousness and being.”<sup>8</sup>

Now, of course, Hegel is using a term that Kant used and it becomes clear in what follows that Hegel is doing this quite purposefully. We need to ask how Hegel’s employment of the category fits with Kant’s use of the same term. Kant speaks of the “categories” in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as pure concepts of the understanding.<sup>9</sup> The categories are distinguished from empirical concepts, which are abstracted from appearances given in experience. Empirical concepts have no binding universality and necessity, since they only mark what commonalities happen to have appeared in some particular selection of given experiences. By contrast, the categories hold true universally and necessarily of all objects of experience. The categories do so, according to Kant, insofar as they determine those combinations of representations that determine any possible object of experience. Kant first introduces them in his so-called Metaphysical Deduction by pointing to Aristotle as having found them in their basic diversity, each corresponding to one of the

forms of judgment that Aristotelian logic uncovered. Kant does not deduce the particular content of the categories and later will maintain that they cannot even be defined since they already underlie all judgments.

Nonetheless, Kant does deduce the general necessary applicability of the categories to objects of experience in his Transcendental Deduction and it is here that Kant uses the categories in a way that comes close to how the category figures in Hegel's observation of consciousness as reason. The whole gist of the transcendental deduction of the categories was that the unity of self-consciousness, or the way in which self-consciousness could be at one with itself, is a fundamental requirement for any kind of conscious awareness. I cannot be conscious of something unless I can accompany my representation of it with the awareness that I am thinking that representation, or, in other words, that it fits within the self-identity or unity of my consciousness. The argument of the transcendental deduction is that this unity of self-consciousness is itself determinative of the objectivity of objects of consciousness. This is because the conditions for representations fitting within the unity of self-consciousness impose upon them a necessary unity, expressed by the categories, which equally affords them objectivity by giving them a non-arbitrary connectedness. The category is therefore, at one and the same time, determinative of the objectivity of objects and the means by which consciousness is at one with itself. On this basis, consciousness of objects can only be in conjunction with self-consciousness. The category thus unites consciousness and self-consciousness, for the unity of self-consciousness operates in and through the category while the category's unification of representations enables them to count for us as objective. The category therefore renders the objectivity of objects intrinsically connected to the unity of self-consciousness. In so doing, the category gives expression to the unity of reason, as a shape of consciousness.

Although Kant distinguishes understanding and reason, and roots the categories in the forms of judgment that he associates with pure understanding, his discussion of the categories is not without relation to reason. After all, Kant is undertaking a critique of pure reason, for which the transcendental deduction of the categories is pivotal. Although Kant will ultimately deny that pure reason can provide any theoretical knowledge of things in themselves, he does establish the intrinsic knowability of objects, at least within the domain of experience. Objects of experience are intrinsically knowable because they are intrinsically at one with the unity of self-consciousness. At least with regard to their categorial determination, they cannot fail to be transparent to self-consciousness.

As expressive of the unity of objectivity and self-consciousness, the category is in and of itself empty. The specification of its dual role does not give it any further content. This is reflected in how Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories does not itself specify their particular contents.

Nonetheless, the category as it figures within consciousness as reason cannot help but have a content given the kind of unity it involves. The category, as the proper object of reason, cannot be indeterminate, any more than can be the consciousness or self-consciousness that it unites. In paragraph 235, Hegel attributes a specific content to the category in function of the nature of the simple unity of self-consciousness and being. Self-consciousness itself has inner difference, as reflected in its emergence from the concluding configuration of understanding. Further, the whole identity of self-consciousness and objectivity involves self-consciousness's being at one with itself and at one with something distinguished from itself. So there cannot help but be differentiation. This consideration does not indicate exactly what content that differentiation possesses, but it does indicate that some definite content is at hand.

In order for the category to have some determinate content, it must be contrastable to others. Accordingly, Hegel proceeds to observe that the category is going to appear as a plurality of categories.<sup>10</sup> There will be a second idealism with multiple determinations on both sides. These determinations will specify how self-consciousness is conscious of itself, for consciousness as reason will be conscious of itself in a determinate manner, which will be exhibited in the determinate character of what it observes.

Further, this differentiation of content, Hegel observes in paragraph 236, cannot be alien to the unity of reason. How could the certainty of reason be maintained if the differentiation of its content on both sides was extraneous and devoid of connection? Consciousness as reason must unify the diversity of this content and bring its plurality into the unity of the category.

This imperative is logically expressed in the relations of universality, particularity, and individuality. Hegel understands individuality to involve the unification of particularity and universality. An individual is determined in and through itself, for it could not be unique if it were not. That means that the individual has a unity or universality that pervades all of its differentiations or particularization. Its unity contains those differentiations, which allows it to be something *sui generis*.

Similarly, the differentiations of the category, the differentiations of consciousness as reason, are not going to be alien to their unity. This mandate still does not give these differentiations any specific filling. All that holds so far is that the object of consciousness as reason has a unity that is differentiated and the differentiations it contains are not extraneous.

In paragraph 237, Hegel observes that with the category the unity of consciousness is posited in a double manner—once as a movement in which theorizing consciousness brings the diverse content of the given into unity and equally as the movement internal to what it confronts, whereby objectivity resolves itself into its own independent unity. Throughout the develop-

ment that follows, differentiations and unifications will be presumed to be taking place on both sides.

By contrast, in perception, consciousness took on itself the task of providing unity or differentiation so as to allow objectivity to contain just one side so that it could be upheld without contradiction. So, for example, the perceiver took on the role of the medium of the different sense modalities so that the diversity of sense properties was not put on the shoulders of the object, in opposition to the unity of the thing.

Likewise in understanding, explanation took place as just a movement of the consciousness, which at that point did not regard the movement as equally occurring in the object, although the object was eventually experienced to have undergone similar transformations. In both cases, the movements were attributed to one side rather than the other. Now, in consciousness as reason, where the object is determined in terms of the category, the movements of differentiation and unification are presumed to take place on both sides, in both consciousness and its object.

Still, all of this is quite indeterminate. Consciousness as reason may be operating with certainty of categorical determination, but consciousness confronts not just an abstraction, but a concrete given with respect to which consciousness must verify its certainty. It is in this sense that, as Hegel remarks in paragraph 238, the idealism of consciousness as reason becomes an absolute empiricism. To validate its certainty, consciousness must immerse itself in the content of the given. Consciousness must embark on a journey of discovery to verify that the unity of self-consciousness is at one with the independent being of objectivity. Certain of itself as reason, consciousness engages in finding itself in the content of the given, operating in a positive and active manner. This undertaking is characterized as the activity of observing reason, of reason that engages in observation of the given so as to uncover determinations that conform to the unity of self-consciousness.

The observation of consciousness as reason is fundamentally different from sense-certainty, perception, and understanding. As Hegel acknowledges in paragraph 240, observing reason still addresses what is a sensuous given, what could be perceived to be a thing with properties, or what could be understood to have dynamic relations. Consciousness as reason deals with all of this in a very different way, which must be kept in mind whenever “observation” comes into play. Observation is not just perception or just understanding. Observation is specifically tied to what reason is all about.

Consciousness as reason still deals with immediately given sensations, with mediated sensuous contents perceived as properties of things, and with the play of forces in the dynamic interaction of objects, but, as Hegel notes, it is not certain of them as what is only other. They are not just other, because, consciousness operates in observation with the certainty of being this other itself. Hegel then adds that, whereas formerly it just happened to conscious-



ness that it perceived and understood what confronted it, now consciousness itself initiates the observations and experience.<sup>11</sup>

What is the connection between consciousness confronting the given as something with which consciousness is certain of being at one and consciousness making observations instead of encountering objects by happenstance? The answer lies in the nature of theorizing. Consciousness as observing is engaged in theorizing, although not in specifically philosophical theorizing. In theorizing, as opposed to mere sensing, perceiving, or understanding, one is coming up with determinations of one's own that are not just one's own, but supposedly about what truly is. The specifications of theory have, and are known by the theorizer to have, this double character. Moreover, they are not just received passively, but are produced by an active engagement in theorizing.

Here, of course, we are dealing with a theorizing that is observational. It is a theorizing about the given, where consciousness observes objects it confronts and finds the categorial determinations that are both subjective and objective, that are known by consciousness to be both true determinations of its object and determinations in which consciousness knows itself.

This is not a matter of applying formal logic to the content of the given. The category involves more than logical consistency, as Kant recognizes in pointing out that following formal logical procedures cannot itself get us at truth or at anything objective.<sup>12</sup> It just gets us to consistent results following presupposed rules from given premises of one sort or another.

Here consciousness is engaged in what Hegel calls an "absolute empiricism." Its observation is undertaken with the certainty of confronting something that is inherently accessible to its knowing because its knowing will find what is completely in agreement with itself in what it confronts. This is the assumption of all theorizing of this sort, that it can read off the character of the given with its own determinations and not just be communing with itself. By intent, observing reason is going to be both communing with itself and communing with the genuine character of what is.

The question is, can observing consciousness verify that it is doing both in its encounter with what it finds given? This is what lies at stake in the developments that follow. In paragraph 243 Hegel very briefly points out the different stages in the ensuing engagements of observing reason. First consciousness will observe nature, then it will observe spirit, and lastly it will observe the relation of both as a sensuous being. What we find is first the observation of nature, both inorganic and organic, followed by psychological observation, observing thought and other aspects of mind as given psychological phenomenon. Finally, there will be an observation of psychological phenomena in relationship to natural phenomena.

All of this comprises a virtual philosophy of science, exposing from within the difficulties of theorizing observationally about nature and mind.

## PART 2

Consciousness as reason takes what is in itself to have the character of the category, of the unity of what is other and in itself, that is, what consciousness confronts, with consciousness's relation to itself. They are presumed to be at one, so that consciousness, in knowing what is other as it truly is, will equally be knowing itself. This is not solipsism, because the self-knowledge is not one in which otherness is removed. The independent object is still there confronting the observing self-consciousness. If the independent object were removed, consciousness would fall back into one of the earlier shapes of self-consciousness.

If the certainty of consciousness as reason were basic to all theorizing, then all theory would be presupposition-ridden, taking the truth of the category for granted. That presupposition-ridden form of reason is, of course, what is being here observed and the whole course of the *Phenomenology* might be said to determine whether philosophical reason can escape that conditioned predicament.

It is important to keep in mind that we are dealing with consciousness, not reason as such. If *Phenomenology* is going to be exhibiting how presuppositional knowing eliminates itself, we will end up confronting a rationality that does not assume the validity of the category nor alternately that thought is merely subjective.

Further, one must not forget that the pure observation of the phenomenological observer is not to be identified with the observation that consciousness as reason performs. Our observation is not certain of the truth of the category or of any other factor. By refraining from making truth claims of our own and letting the consciousness under our observation to advance and test its own claims, we escape any inclusion in the gallery of shapes of consciousness that *Phenomenology* contains.

The different shapes of consciousness as observing reason all involve theoretical endeavors. Admittedly, the theorizing at times involves intervening in nature, not for the sake of transforming it but to uncover its genuine character. In other words, the theorizing will involve experimenting. It will also involve observing psychological phenomena, where the act of observation, most notably in introspection, will impact upon the object under examination.

Consciousness as reason will subsequently involve shapes where consciousness is engaged in practical activities to bring into being the unity of reason. Consciousness will then be concerned no longer with observing how reason is in the world, but with making the world rational.

In paragraph 244, Hegel makes a basic point that will underlie everything that is at hand here. He notes that for consciousness as reason, what is observed should signify something universal and not just be a sensuous

“this.” Observation will be expressly concerned with uncovering what is universal in the given, both as a way of not estranging itself from the universality of its own knowing and of getting at the genuine character of what is.

It will be interesting to see what the different way stations in this development turn out to be and to observe how the move from one to the other reflects what is problematic with each successive effort. As with every shape of consciousness, the self-examination under observation provides us with an immanent critique of an epistemological position standing in the way of presuppositionless philosophy.

In paragraph 245, the observation of observing reason begins in earnest. What is the universal that consciousness as reason first uncovers and why does observation begin here? Hegel presents consciousness initially uncovering the uniformity in repeated events. Consciousness as reason begins with the familiar employment of empirical observation in scientific research, which finds universality in the mere regularity or repetition of similar events in what is sensuously given. This involves not just noting what is at hand, but remembering and associating sensuous givens that are observed over time and then recognizing and describing the encountered regularities.

Hegel remarks that what is uncovered is a completely superficial form of universality that resides in the act of describing and not necessarily in the object itself.<sup>13</sup> This is reflected in how once the object is described, it loses its interest and consciousness moves on to others. There is an indeterminacy to the universal, which is exhibited in how the particularization of the universal is a singularization, involving an inexhaustible supply of objects for further description. Although observation might seem to have an immeasurable wealth of material, this unending scope is indicative of the limits of its enterprise. Consciousness as reason observing nature can never really know whether what regularities it has described are not just a contingency, whose putative universality will be contradicted by further observations. This possibility stymies consciousness’s attempt to uncover in objectivity some universality and necessity allowing it to fit the unity of self-consciousness and prove to be intrinsically rational. No matter how many observations encounter the same pattern, there is never any guarantee that such regularity will continue to be observed. Since observation is always directed at particular instances, there is nothing about them as they are given that need apply to anything else. The task of observation is endless because there is never any assurance that the repetitions one has observed will be found elsewhere in the future. No repetitions can themselves provide sufficient evidence for distinguishing between what is essential and inessential or for carving things up as being of a certain kind. All one has are empirical family resemblances that are always corrigible, always liable to revision in light of further observations, always contingent. Consciousness thus experiences that it cannot confirm the rationality of the given in this way. What repetitions are observed

are always fragmentary, always incomplete, always leaving consciousness uncertain of having really established any unchanging universality.

What can consciousness as reason next undertake to remedy the problem it has experienced? Must it seek a more concrete kind of universality in which the contingency of the discovered associations is overcome?

The obvious option for consciousness is to direct its observation of nature at distinguishing between the essential and unessential features of objects so as to determine their necessary universal being. This can be regarded as a response to the problem of simply describing observed repetitions, which provided no explanation nor any differentiation of what is contingent from what is non-contingent. Whereas the form of repetition can apply to anything under the sun, the discrimination of essential versus inessential content is more concretely specific.

Here consciousness as reason is on the lookout for distinguishing marks that divide what is essential from what is inessential. As given by observation, these marks are empirical, yet they are still presumed to be essential. They are to allow for a division of things into kinds, to which they belong in virtue of possessing the features that are universal and necessary to everything sharing that specific nature. The question is, how can consciousness as reason verify that the distinctions being drawn are essential to the objects themselves?

Reason is embarked on uncovering the taxonomy of nature. Not surprisingly, Hegel illustrates this form of observation with examples of animals, distinguished into kinds by means of distinguishing marks of claws, teeth, and the like.<sup>14</sup> These features are used to identify different types of animals and thereby distinguish natural genera and species. We observe animals actively distinguishing themselves by these means, upholding their own species survival by using these weapons to protect, nourish, and preserve themselves against other animals. These features serve as species specific distinguishing marks insofar as they involve a unity of a determinate particularity and the universal of the kind. The distinguishing mark is a universal determinacy, a differentia necessary to the kind, which is to be found both in knowing and in what is known. A certain kind is identified and its identity is associated with this feature.

This strategy of dividing things into universal species by means of distinguishing marks is, however, not viable. It ends up contradicting itself because of the inherent difficulty of carrying through and validating any empirical speciation.

One might ascribe the difficulty to the phenomenon of evolution and how species undergo a continuous development, making problematic any fixing of their essential characteristics and boundaries. Even if that fluidity were not the case, however, consciousness as reason would be unable to certify its observed taxonomies. The problem is that consciousness cannot establish

through observation which distinguishing marks really are essential. Just as observation can never guarantee that regularities so far observed have strict universality and necessity, so observation cannot ensure that any distinguishing marks are intrinsically connected to the species being of some group of natural objects. Exceptions can always pop up, where something lacks a privileged distinguishing mark yet seems to belong to the same species. After all, how can one know which mark is essential or not essential? Just because all observed examples so far share in a certain feature does not secure that it is a genuine differentia of the species.

In paragraph 248 Hegel observes how law can be invoked in connection with the search for distinguishing marks. Law arose before in understanding with respect to force and its expression and the solicitation of forces by one another. Here, in consciousness's observation of nature, law is sought after as operating with respect to the species being of things. That is, things are observed to be subject to law in function of their distinguishing marks, so that observed laws provide a way of getting at these essentialities. Such laws provide a unity for the distinguishing marks, conferring necessity and rationality for them in face of the specter of empirical contingency. Can species specific law, however, fulfill this rescue mission?

Once more, the familiar problem of induction puts in jeopardy the attempt to put law into these particular things and secure their differentia. Observation is no more able to certify what is a bona fide law than it can certify what is an essential feature. No matter how many cases are observed, the presence of some lawful connection between species being and distinguishing mark can always be contradicted by further observations. As Hegel points out, consciousness ends up relying upon analogy to allow observed laws to apply to all future cases.<sup>15</sup> Yet analogy cannot establish strict universality, for just as the earth is inhabited and Venus is a planet like earth, it does not follow that Venus is inhabited.

Consciousness might be tempted to appeal to probabilities, but probability cannot certify that a law strictly holds true. Moreover, observation cannot guarantee the objectivity of any probability tied to species being. Whatever chances have been observed before need not be encountered in the future.

Admittedly, as Hegel notes in paragraph 250, consciousness can experience that a stone falls insofar as it is a stone and its weight has an essential relation to the earth expressed in the rate of its falling. So consciousness encounters in experience the existence of the law. Yet, Hegel adds, consciousness must have it there as a concept. Only on both accounts can the observed law be validated. What does this reference to the concept signify? Hegel previously associated the concept with self-consciousness, attributing internal difference to both. The concept as such could also be said to be the universal. The universal has internal difference, an inherent differentiation, for the universal cannot be the universal without having particularization.

How, then, would reference to the concept bear upon law in connection with the divisions of species being? What would the concept bring to law that would enable law to have truth? Presumably the content of the law would be not contingent but necessary. Somehow whatever universality is expressed by the law generates its particular content.

Law as such, however, is empty. The content would appear to be completely contingent. Accordingly, as Hegel observes in paragraph 251, reason has an instinct to deal with this problem and set up experiments to try to purify law.

What is this “instinct of reason” that Hegel refers to over and over again in his account of the observation of nature? We have seen consciousness as reason having tried to just describe things to get at what was universal and finding itself unable to get contents that fit law or universals in a non-arbitrary way. Consciousness has to engage in experiments to purify law and transform its aspects into concepts, although consciousness does not quite know what it is actually doing. What is this purification supposed to be accomplishing and why speak of it in connection with the concept? Purification is needed to provide for the inherent, necessary differentiation of conceptual determination because the content is empirically given. Consciousness cannot really be sure whether it is dealing with what is necessary or contingent, so it needs to purify things and get rid of as much of the particular residue as possible. So, for example, consciousness must supplant the proliferation of particular laws of the electricity of rosin, of glass rods, of static electricity, or of batteries, and so forth. Instead, consciousness must uncover laws of electricity in general, removing what might be peculiar to the particular types of things that had been observed as the basis of getting at electrical laws.

Since, however, consciousness that observes nature employs experiments to accomplish this purification, it cannot get away from the given. Once again, consciousness immerses itself in the empirical. Unlike perception, consciousness as reason takes the initiative, doing experiments. This active engagement, however, does not eliminate the element of contingent particularity. Consciousness may exclude as many extraneous things as possible, setting up controlled situations to arrive at purified laws, pertaining to abstract matters, such as electricity or gravity, rather than particular bodies. Nonetheless, empirically given content remains the starting point upon which the identification of law depends.

The laws of nature are not themselves existing things. Nevertheless they are physical insofar as they are based upon observation of nature. Although the laws may be purified to remove as much sensuous content as possible, they are still conditioned by what is sensibly given.

Hegel regards the experience of this limitation as comprising a turning point in consciousness’s self-examination. At the beginning of paragraph 253

he notes that what actually gets verified through this endeavor is that law as such is really free of sensuous being. Law cannot possess the strict universal necessity of law if it remains caught in sensuous being, the content of which for observation remains tainted with particularity and contingency. Through observing nature, consciousness as reason has found that the universality securing the rationality of the given must be freed of all extraneous sensuous content.

This experience impels consciousness as reason to undertake a new type of observation directed at a different type of object. That object is life, observed as such in all its self-sustaining, internally differentiated life process. Life comes into play because it presents the concept in sensuous being, moving itself independently, preserving its own active unity through the complementary functioning of its organs, and overcoming the intrusion of external contingencies. Life is a very special kind of object and its nature can only be addressed by a different kind of observation.

First of all, we need to understand how the living thing, the organism, involves the process of the concept in physical reality. Hegel points to the absolute fluidity to be found in life.<sup>16</sup> No separation between essential and inessential occurs in the life process, for any such separation would leave certain factors separated out, bearing distinctive relations on their own, independent of the whole to which they belong. Organisms sustain themselves and in doing so the fixed independent being of its parts is overcome to the extent that they all serve as means to the whole as well as being part of the whole, being both means and ends at the same time. This is what consciousness as reason must contend with in confronting life. The question is, how can consciousness find in life the verification of reason? How can consciousness truly theorize about life, observing in life what is at one with the unity of self-consciousness?

### PART 3

The observation of life proper begins in paragraph 255. Consciousness as reason now attempts to theorize about life, coming up with a universal description of it, a law that will distinguish living from inorganic nature.

Here consciousness begins by observing the true relation of living things to their environment. This involves the relation of life to the elemental factors of nature, such as air, water, earth, climate, and, generally speaking, the factors that universally enter into the relation of the organism to its environment. The instinct of reason is to observe the relation of organic and inorganic nature to uncover the laws that govern this aspect of the reality of life. This relation, which comprises the metabolic process, comes first in the observa-

tion of life to the extent that all further aspects of the organism depend upon it.

What is at stake is not observing the relation of the organism to any particular nonliving thing but rather getting at the elemental aspects of metabolism, which comprise the universal conditions of life. Consciousness as reason here seeks to comprehend life in its relationship to its general inorganic conditions and uncover the laws that apply. Can it possibly meet success?

The examples Hegel describes highlight the inherent difficulties of this venture. Consciousness may be tempted to find a lawful connection between the character of air and the nature of birds, or likewise between the sea and fish. In each case, however, there is something inherently arbitrary about any proffered law. How can consciousness be certain that the general features of the elements of inorganic nature dictate the particular form of life in question? Which of the manifold features of the organism are lawfully determined by some particular element? What prevents any connection from being a contingent empirical association, reflecting nothing more than happenstance?

These problems might seem to be just particular instances of the general difficulty of using empirical associations to support law. Is there something more at stake here that is peculiar to the observation of life? Hegel observes that the relations between the organic and the inorganic elemental factors cannot be laws for several reasons.

First, the kind of relations which are pointed to by no means exhaust the range of possible life forms. So, for example, there is nothing about air that necessitates that airborne organisms take some particular form as opposed to indefinitely varied others.

Secondly, there is no inherent connection between the elemental inorganic factors and *any* determinate life form. There is no concept of thick fur contained in the concept of the arctic climate. We do not have here a necessary connection of polarities, where if there is a north pole there must be a south pole. Consciousness is confronting features that are insusceptible of an intrinsic connection. The question is, why would that be the case? Is there anything about the living things that guarantees there will not be any such inherent connection?

The living organism has an independent, self-sustaining character that may depend upon putting its environment to use, but how it does so is not dictated by that environment. Rather, how the organism reacts to its environment is dictated by the organism's own character. The living thing will respond in terms of its own nature, even if that nature may arise through the contingencies of evolution.

The resulting failure of consciousness's attempts to find lawful connections between elemental environmental factors and the particular features of the organism leaves observation in a position to turn to teleological explana-



tion. The experience of discovering no laws externally governing life now leads consciousness to direct its observation at the internal purposiveness of the living thing. That internal teleology of life cannot be captured by lawful connections such as rule a mechanism, which does not move itself, but undergoes alterations that are caused from without. Law, which applies equally to all individuals subject to it, no matter what their character, specifies a relationship that is independent of the nature of those individuals it governs. It thereby involves external necessitation, such as where some antecedent state of affair determines what follows according to some rule.

In teleology, a very different relationship lies at hand. Instead of external causes producing separate effects, there is an end, which is to some degree the same at the beginning and at the end of the teleological process. Even though at the start the end is unrealized, it is still present in some fashion, whether as a seed that will develop into an adult plant or as a design in the mind of the maker of an artifact. In the case of the living thing, the end is connected to the nature of what it is. The organism is subject to the development that brings the end to realization.

Accordingly, life, as internally purposive, is insusceptible of being determined in the external manner of inanimate things. It is self-sustaining and thereby has itself for its end. Nonetheless, Hegel begins consciousness's explanation of life by applying an external, rather than internal teleology. In doing so, he follows the path of all talk of intelligent design vis-à-vis life. Life is observed to have a purposive character, where all its organs serve to sustain the life process that contains them. Consciousness then tries to account for this purposiveness by regarding the organism to be the product of some external teleological process, where life is designed and made by some intelligence external to it.

This kind of explanation, however, does not allow consciousness to experience in the organism it observes what it purports to find. No external teleological explanation can fit the internal teleology manifest in the basic self-sustaining character of life. It is no accident that we have not observed the actual making of a living thing by a designer. We have instead observed living things to undergo developments unique to organisms that could not occur to artifacts. Living things assimilate inorganic material, grow, and reproduce. None of these essential life processes are compatible with external teleology because they all proceed with an internal purposiveness, where the organism moves itself to engage in activities that sustain itself as an individual and as a species. Unlike an artifact, the living thing is both the beginning and end of its own internal process.

Consciousness, in confronting the living thing, is not, however, able to observe this internal purposiveness. Instead, as Hegel notes in paragraph 259, the activity and the purpose fall asunder for consciousness. Consciousness observes the activity of a living thing to have a definite starting point and

consciousness also observes it to have a distinct end point. Why need consciousness observe the organism in a way in which its activity is regarded as being separate from the purpose, so that, as Hegel observes, the necessity is concealed and seems to fall outside the organism? The activity is observed to be for the sake of an external purpose. Why should that be so?

One might dispute that the activity of the organism is designed for some external purpose by noting how the activity literally ends when the organism dies. Of course, one could regard that as the end of life that is the termination of life. By the same token, one could regard the activity of the organism as being an activity for its own sake in that the living thing sustains its own life process. The life process is predicated upon itself and it results in itself. Still, the life process leads to death, which might make it appear as if it is not something self-sustaining. After all, the life process peters out eventually.

If one separates the activity from the end or purpose then the activity is a means to the end. Like any means to an end, it may not achieve its end. Because it is separate and different from the end it serves, the doing of the activity cannot guarantee that it realizes that end. Other factors may intercede. Or the activity may just fail on its own. Likewise, it is always possible that another activity may serve equally or better as a means to the same end. In these respects, there is an element of contingency in the relation of activity and purpose when the activity is not for its own sake, but instrumental to a purpose different from itself.

This contingency between the end and the activity of the organism bears upon the relation of genus and species. At various junctures Hegel points out that one cannot observe a universal. Observation always confronts individuals. Nonetheless, consciousness as reason is observing nature so as to get at something that is universal, and thereby confront its own unity. Then consciousness as reason can establish a kind of lawfulness and find a division between purpose and self-preservation, where the purpose is universal and the self-preserving organism is individual. In truth, however, purpose and individual life process are really not distinguished in the organism.

If, however, observation encounters what is contingent, it cannot really discover the inherent connection between the unity of the organism and its particular differentiations. Instead, as Hegel observes in paragraph 260, consciousness can try to connect the universality of the organism with its activity. But, as Hegel notes in paragraph 261, the universality of the organism is not present for the observing consciousness in the appearing process. The unity of the living thing is rather an inner movement of the organic that can only be grasped in thought as concept.

What does the concept have, which perception and understanding lack, that is adequate for apprehending life? The concept possesses the same internal differentiation that life has, an inner differentiating of the self which remains in unity with the self, enabling the self to be a universal individual.

This process cannot be perceived because perception always remains conditioned by the sensuous facticity of the object, which can never be fully resolved into the unity of the thing. Similarly, understanding may invoke force and a supersensible unity underlying sensuous phenomena, but in so doing, it separates the universal from the sensuous process it underlies.

In face of this difficulty, consciousness observes life by distinguishing between inner and outer. The outer is the expression of the underlying self-preserving unity of the living thing, which, in order to maintain itself, must have a manifestation. The question is, how are inner and outer to be observed and related? Paragraphs 264 and 265 follow consciousness's attempt to understand the connection of inner and outer in the living.

The distinction of inner and outer involves factors that are intrinsically connected insofar as they give expression to the same content. To comprehend the living thing in terms of a relation of inner and outer, consciousness must observe both inner and outer and confirm the identity of content. For this to be the case, both the inner and outer must have an observable shape. The inner aspect of the inner life of the organism involves such basic life processes as sentience, irritability, and reproduction, whereas these inner processes have their outward expression in the nervous system, the muscle system, and the sexual reproduction system. One is the expression of the other.

Clearly, there is a connection between these two sets of features. There is a connection between the nervous system and sentience, just as there is a connection between the muscle system and irritability and between the reproductive organs and the process of reproduction. Nonetheless, there is a discrepancy between these inner/outer differentiations and the life process that undercuts the adequacy of the correlation here made by consciousness as reason.

The problem is that the separation of inner and outer aspects cannot be maintained. This is because the outer expressions are contained in the processes that are distinguished as their inner correlates. There is no sentience, irritability, or reproduction without the involvement of their respective organs and these organs are not what they are without involving those "inner" processes. The inner/outer description treats them as if they were separable, but in truth, they cannot be held apart.

Further, the delineation of the organs as the outer expression of the inner processes reduces them to an anatomical description, where each is just an organ system, separate from others. There is something inherently disanalogous between these anatomical systems and the all-encompassing life process that operates in and through them. Anatomy presents the organs in their spatial externality, whereas in life they are inherently connected to one another and the ongoing life process that sustains them and itself through their complementary working. The different aspects of the living organism are not

separable from the operations of the other life systems. They are bound up with one another in the unity of the organism. As such, they cannot be extracted in the way in which the “outer” expression of anatomy sets them in physical externality. The anatomical way of characterizing organs treats them more or less as things. Not surprisingly, anatomical exploration is something one does on a cadaver. The life process by contrast involves the unification of the whole body and this process cannot be observed by looking at anatomical divisions. Consciousness cannot observe the life process itself by isolating some particular set of organs because that process is always a working of the whole organism in a particular mode of its activity that is necessarily related to the other modes. This cannot be visualized by observing the organism in the external and fixed terms of anatomy.

Although the discrepancy between anatomical description and the life process holds generally of organisms, Hegel admits in paragraphs 265 and 267 that the examples he describes are not generic to life but particular to the animal organism. Reproduction may apply to organisms in general, but only animals have sensibility and irritability. It should be obvious that the difficulties presented in Hegel’s account of consciousness’s observation of life apply just as much to botany. Anatomical descriptions of plants that externally separate out the different systems of plant life fall into the same discrepancy with the living process of the whole plant. Hegel notes that the different systems of the organism are more distinguished and readily observable in animals, which makes understandable why his account would use examples from animal anatomy.<sup>17</sup>

Whether the relation of inner and outer in life is applied to animals or plants, that relation needs to be characterized in a way that can validate the observations of consciousness. Since inner and outer give expression to the same content, qualitative differences should not hold. Instead, the relation of inner and outer seems most appropriately delineated quantitatively. This allows for laws that, for example, would establish proportions between the intensive magnitudes of sensibility and irritability. Consciousness could maintain that the more intense is sensitivity, the greater is the magnitude of irritability. Is there anything problematic with characterizing the living thing in a lawful manner by applying this kind of quantitative relation?

Hegel observes that consciousness cannot succeed in verifying that any such quantitative laws have a necessary application. Paragraphs 274 and 275 put on display the difficulties consciousness encounters when it makes all sorts of anatomical comparisons and tries to find lawful relationships. None prove to quite fit the truth of the organism. All these attempts take features of the organism and treat them independently, relating them in their isolation to some other factor. The resulting law is contrary to the unity of the organism. Instead of leaving the organism something that independently determines itself as a whole in its relationships to its environment, consciousness ob-

serves it in its immediate presence, where its organs appear as separate parts, subject to externalities. Under this vantage of extraneous determination, consciousness can make whatever connections it likes and see what lawful, quantitative relations happen to be observed. In each case, the results will suffer from the contingency that is left when the unity of the organism is ignored.

Alternately, consciousness can consider the shape of the organism with respect to its inner and outer character to see if any universal connection can be found. The relation of inner character with respect to shape, the bodily configuration of the organism, is something that really applies to the inorganic side of life. It is something that Hegel brings into play in his philosophy of nature when he is determining aspects of physics that go beyond the relations of mechanics, whose laws of matter and motion pertain to bodies irrespective of their kind.<sup>18</sup> What lies at stake is how bodies get internally differentiated in purely physical ways. One basic way is through what Hegel calls "specific gravity" or degree of density.<sup>19</sup> The density of an object pertains not to its outer configuration but to how it distinguishes itself from other things that might have the same outer configuration, doing so in a manner that is internal to it but still purely physical. By contrast, there are also external ways in which objects get physically distinguished. Cohesion is a prime example.<sup>20</sup> Cohesion can take various forms. An object can have cohesion in terms of one dimension, such that it can keep its physical unity in one direction only. It is then brittle, breaking apart if it gets pushed in some other direction. Alternately, a thing can have a different form of cohesion whereby it is elastic in all directions. These ways in which things get physically distinguished can be applied to the organism, so far as one is dealing with its completely external character. This consideration of the organism is completely indifferent to life and can be pursued quantitatively.

In paragraph 291, Hegel observes a further way in which consciousness brings quantitative considerations to bear in reference to genus and species. He does so in connection with specific gravity, which involves something pertaining to the physical thing that is independent of its shape. Now, in a certain respect, the genus is also independent of the organism's shape. It is independent, but in a different way. Namely, the genus is not tied to any particular shape of its kind, for each individual belonging to it can die and the genus still carries on. On the other hand, the genus has specific differences that determine its species. Consciousness could apply mathematical relations to the relation of the genus to its species or all its individual members. The question is, would doing so be a rational way of dealing with the genus and species of living things? Can any such quantitative relation have necessity and allow consciousness to come to truths that are an embodiment of reason? Can reproduction and the relation of genus and species provide a domain in which observation can find quantitative laws that are not extraneous, not

contingent and indifferent to life? To verify its observation as reason, consciousness would have to establish the necessity of the relationships it finds in the genus and species. This would depend upon some way of demarcating one genus from another, but the problems of taxonomy have exhibited the difficulty of doing so through observation. Picking out distinguishing marks is always questionable. Is there then any alternate way of coming up with something genuinely rational, or does consciousness find itself immersed in something alien?

With the failure of consciousness's attempts to observe living things in their truth, consciousness as reason has reached the point of moving into a different domain. Instead of undertaking the observation of nature, which is immediately distinguishable from self-consciousness as an independent object, consciousness will now engage in observation that is self-observation. This self-observation begins as observation of psychological phenomena and then later observes psychological phenomena in relationship to what is external to the mind, be it the body it inhabits or the world it confronts.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 230, p. 138.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 232, p. 139.
3. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 154–55.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 246, p. 149.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 235, p. 142.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 235, p. 142.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 235, p. 142.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 235, p. 142.
9. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A76–83, B102–9, pp. 210–14.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 235, p. 142.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 240, p. 145.
12. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A55, B79, pp. 195–96.
13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 245, pp. 147–48.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 246, p. 149.
15. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 250, p. 152.
16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 254, p. 154.
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 265, p. 161.
18. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), paras. 272–336, pp. 85–272.
19. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, para. 293, pp. 126.
20. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, paras. 295–98, pp. 130–34.

## *Lecture 8*

# **Reason as Observation of Self-Consciousness**

### PART 1

Throughout the observation of nature undertaken by consciousness as reason we continually encounter a striving to come up with laws governing the observed phenomena. This striving is intimately connected with consciousness as reason's defining certainty that what it opposes involves the unity of self-consciousness and its object. That unity, crystallized in the category, is identified as the crux of rationality, ensuring the intrinsic conceptualizability of the given and its identification with self-consciousness. As reason, consciousness communes both with itself and what is distinct from itself, doing so first by finding conceptual determinacy in what it confronts.

Here the nature of self-consciousness is identified with conceptual determination in general. Self-consciousness initially arose as the outcome of understanding, characterized by an immanent differentiated unity, at one with itself in repelling itself from itself such that this differentiation is really only an internal differentiation. Thereby, self-consciousness does not confront something really alien to itself.

This internal differentiation was identified with the infinite, life, and also conceptual determination, in which the particularization of the universal is inherent in the universal's unity. Accordingly, life was seen as involving a process of the kind shared by the concept, just as self-consciousness was seen as involving something that relates to itself in the manner of conceptual determination.

Insofar as reason unites self-consciousness with the independent presence of objectivity, observation of consciousness as reason is not just conscious of objects or self-conscious. It is more specifically a theorizing consciousness,

conceptualizing what it finds given. To the extent that consciousness discovers conceptual determinacy in what it confronts, it thereby finds its own internally differentiated unity.

It is worth asking why the conceptualization involved in observation should take the form of uncovering laws. Why is it that consciousness as reason's observation of the given should seek lawful relations in what is inorganic, what is alive, and finally, in the self, both in its own interiority and in its relationship to the world? Why should what Hegel calls the "instinct" of reason operate in this way? Why should law be that by means of which self-consciousness finds itself reflected in what it observes to be given?

Consciousness as reason is not just passively receptive. It takes the initiative of making observations and running experiments. Yet in every case it exercises its theorizing activity with respect to what it finds given. In so doing, it engages in two specific operations through which it conceptualizes the given. On the one hand, consciousness generalizes what it observes and, on the other hand, consciousness uncovers laws that govern what it confronts.

Consciousness observation of nature began with the most rudimentary generalization, where consciousness just found what repeated itself. The registering of those repetitions is a kind of generalization that recognizes the regularities in phenomenal nature. Although many treat this type of generalization as if it were exhaustive of universality, it involves a very particular form. The same is true of the general uncovering of the lawfulness of phenomena. It is hardly equivalent to a complete grasp of universality as it informs objectivity.

Here the generalization or universalization is something objective. It involves starting from the given, which, to the extent that it has particulars that are going to be particulars of the universal, involves particulars that have equally to be individual. Most thinkers fail to distinguish properly between the particular and the individual, but there can be no plurality of particulars unless they not only exemplify the universal they share, but are distinguished from one another as differentiated particulars or individuals.

That which is generalized involves a plurality of factors that each exhibit what is common to them. This common determinacy can be extracted from their given phenomenal being and each factor is particular to the extent that it instantiates what they have in common. As particular, as instantiations, as exhibiting that which binds them together, however, they are not distinguishable from one another. To be a particular may involve a relation to the universal, but it does not itself distinguish particulars from one another. Yet, to have particulars, there has to be the possibility of plurality, since otherwise the distinction of universal and particular collapses. Their plurality requires that they be differentiated, that they be individuals and not just particulars.



What distinguishes generalization from other forms of conceptual determination is that generalization starts with individuals that are given and then picks out something that can be extracted from them all. Precisely because what is extracted is that which is common to them, it in no way differentiates or individuates them. Their distinguishing individuality is inherently external to what binds them together.

Generalization is thus a specific type of thinking or universalizing that is conditioned by given individuals and incapable of distinguishing them from one another. Due to this dependency upon independently given individuals, generalization is not an autonomous but rather a heteronomous, relative conceptualization.

The same can be said of law. Law's dependent character was quite explicitly exposed in the experience of consciousness as understanding. There law captured what was constant and necessary in the flux of appearance, but in doing so, law was indifferent to all the contingency and individuality of the phenomena it governed. These factors burdened law with extraneous determinations for which it could not account. Everything falling under the jurisdiction of law is treated equally. That is why Aristotle can speak of justice as being both the lawful and the equal.<sup>1</sup> Law does not distinguish what it regulates, leaving an extraneous element undetermined by it. Consequently, phenomena are not just appearances of law, for they possess a content to which law is indifferent. Like generalization, law comprises a universality that is formal.

Why then does consciousness as reason first enlist the formal universality of generalization and law? Consciousness as reason embarks on its observation with certainty that what it finds given is conceptualizable or universally determinable. Since it takes its point of departure from the given individuals it confronts, observation has little choice but to employ generalization and lawful determination. Consciousness's theorizing is relative and dependent upon the given it opposes. This renders the concepts it comes up with necessarily formal, for they refer to individuals whose differentiation is given prior to and independently of the derivative universals that consciousness as reason formulates. Hence, observation employs the same generalization of lawful determination over and over again, moving from one kind of content to another.

As a result, observing consciousness finds its efforts to verify the rationality of the given never quite successful. Although it presumes the given to be conceptualizable and at one with self-consciousness, the universality it employs can never fully capture what it confronts. Hegel will later point out that the underlying pitfall of the observation of nature is that it seeks to find reason in the form of being, of nature as it is immediately given. Although objects are held to be at one with self-consciousness and universality, they are taken up in a form independent of any process or development. The

extraneous character of the particular content of the given reflects how the given is not taken in as something having the internal differentiating activity characterizing self-consciousness and universality alike.

What consciousness as reason confronts under the general heading of nature throughout its initial observations are those given objects that are not themselves self-consciousness, but are presumed to be one with universality despite existing in an immediacy depriving them of any developmental process. This is true even when the objects of observation are living things, which are still observed in their immediate givenness, be it with respect to their external relations or an inner/outer divide. Accordingly, observation goes about discovering the truth residing in what it confronts in nature by employing the kind of universality that has a conditioned character, reflecting its dependence upon independently given individuals and the formality such dependence entails. Because observed nature has the form of being, it has a given individuality that the activity of observing finds rather than generates. Since the phenomena of nature are already at hand, consciousness as reason can only theorize about something whose individuality is not constituted or generated by the activity of consciousness or by an objective process possessing the same internal differentiation. Consciousness thus has no other option than to engage in the kind of theorizing or conceptualizing that presupposes the individual content it is addressing and thereby involves the formal knowing that imposes a form of universality upon a subject matter whose content is independently determined.

Consciousness's experience of the inherent limits of this undertaking provides the impetus for moving from the observation of nature to the observation of self-consciousness. Nonetheless, it is worth noting how this move parallels what happened at the end of the section of "Consciousness" that led to the section of "Self-consciousness." At the end of the final shape of consciousness proper, of consciousness as understanding, consciousness discovered that the truth of its object that lay behind the veil of the flux of appearances was none other than consciousness's own activity. Consciousness came to this discovery, however, in conjunction with confronting life as its object. Moreover, the life it confronted was experienced with respect to the process of the genus. Through this encounter, consciousness as understanding came to encounter itself as its object.

Now, something similar is happening. Once again life figures as the object of consciousness, although not as an object of understanding but as an object of reason. Life is observed in its immediate givenness with the certainty that it is conceptually determinate and the task of observation is to uncover its true universal character. Consciousness here experiences the difficulties of trying to get at life in terms of inner and outer dimensions of the living thing and in respect to its shape and external entanglements. None of these efforts could adequately capture the life process because that process contin-

ually overcomes its given shape and alters itself in function of its internal purposiveness. This difficulty comes to a head in observing the life process in connection with the relation of genus and species. Consciousness there discovers that organisms have a contingency that is opaque to a thoroughgoing conceptual specification. Organisms have a genus determination, which imparts a universal determination to their kind, but that common nature is still indifferent to the complete individuality of the organisms that belong to the genus. That is, the genus pervades life forms in a way that leaves a lot of overdetermination, of contingency.

From this predicament, consciousness will take the object of its observation to no longer be something that in truth is other than self-consciousness. Instead, the observation of consciousness as reason takes its object to be self-consciousness. This turns out to be self-consciousness of a very specific sort, given the certainty with which observation proceeds.

The whole development wherein observation turns to self-consciousness is divided into two parts. First, there is the observation of self-consciousness in its "purity," taken by itself. Then there is the observation of self-consciousness in its relation to external actuality. In both fields of observation, consciousness will once more seek out the laws that govern the phenomena under view.

When consciousness observes self-consciousness in its purity, it will be addressing the conceptual determinations that fall within its own activity. Here consciousness will be seeking to uncover the laws of logic that apply to its thinking as it appears. This subject matter is distinct from the living actuality of self-consciousness and its worldly involvements. The observation of the thinking of consciousness will operate under the presumption that this thinking is rational, that it has some purchase on objectivity. Nevertheless the laws sought are still regarded to be only the laws of phenomenal thinking, as distinct from the world to which that thinking might relate.

What connection can there be between this starting point of the observation of self-consciousness and the end of the observation of nature, which terminates by addressing the process of the genus and trying to think about it in a lawful way? Hegel sheds light on this in a retrospective overview he inserts late in the discussion of phrenology, which brings the observation of self-consciousness to a close. There, in paragraphs 341 thru 343, he looks back over the entire development of observation and briefly sketches the principal turns in the self-examinations of consciousness as reason.

He points out that, to begin with, in the first mode of observation, the sensuous being of the inorganic objects under view had already vanished for the observing consciousness. They vanished in that the relations of inorganic nature were regarded as being in truth what was generalizable or what was lawfully present—namely, the pure extractions, whose simple concepts are supposed to be firmly tied to the existence of things. This connection, how-

ever, proved to be tenuous. Consciousness was left with a pure movement in which the sensuous being of the given was overridden, resulting in the process of life, in which the sensuous is subject to continuous alterations in which its unity reaffirms itself.

So consciousness moved on to an observation of life, where what confronted observation was a self-related, negative essence, standing on its own. Since the living thing differentiates itself internally, it maintained its unity by altering itself rather than depending upon other things. Nevertheless, the observation of life only found its extracted law in the inorganic aspect of organisms. Observation could not find the life process truly expressed in the given phenomena. Instead, Hegel notes,

The organic process is only *implicitly* free, but is not *explicitly* free for itself; the being-for-self of its freedom appears in *purpose* and *exists* as another being, as a wisdom that is conscious of itself and is outside of the process. Reason in the role of observer thus turns to this wisdom, turns to Spirit, to the Notion existing as a universality, or to purpose existing as purpose; and henceforth the object before it is its own essence.<sup>2</sup>

Hegel says little more to indicate the transition from the observation of life to the observation of self-consciousness. The organic process displays the freedom of something that is self-differentiating. Life has that character in itself, but the living thing does not relate to itself as being self-differentiating or self-determining. Instead, the life process stands in relation to itself in something external to its individual being—the genus. The genus is that which gives the life process an articulated universal realization by pervading the individual living things that belong to it. They, however, are not universal for themselves, for they must reproduce and die for the genus to persist. Organisms have to go beyond themselves to generate their universal nature. In that respect, their universal character is not something to which they relate themselves. Their universal character is to be found in something that transcends the actual individual life form—the genus that is affirmed by their demise and reproduction. That genus is captured not in the individual organism but in the theorizing observation of life. In other words, the truth of life is experienced to lie in the mind that observes the genus process.

In paragraph 342, Hegel describes how observation thereupon turns to mind, writing that “it turns its attention at first to its purity . . . ; but since Reason *qua* observer apprehends the object which moves among its own distinct moments, as an inert being, its Laws of Thought become connections of one constant moment to another constant moment. But the content of these laws being only moments, these run together into the single unit of self-consciousness. This new object, similarly taken as an *inert being*, is the *single, contingent* self-consciousness.”<sup>3</sup>

Here in paragraph 342, Hegel is giving an overview of the first two parts of the observation of self-consciousness. The whole observation of self-consciousness falls into three major sections, which are extremely unequal in length. The first section is highly compressed, dealing in the briefest way with what could be considered descriptive logic, which uncovers the laws of thinking as given to observation. This observation of the laws of phenomenal thought leads to an observation seeking what lawful relationships can be found governing actual self-consciousness as it stands immersed in the world. This psychological observation explores what laws regulate the interaction of individual self-consciousness and its encompassing environment. What follows thirdly is the observation that addresses self-consciousness in its own individual actuality, that is, in its embodiment. Here, consciousness as reason is concerned with discovering the laws that determine self-consciousness in relation to different aspects of its own body. Such are the basic stages through which consciousness observes itself.

The observation of consciousness by consciousness as reason first focuses upon self-consciousness doing nothing but thinking. Here the phenomenal thought process is observed independently of its relation to other things, as well as independently of its own embodiment. That is, phenomenal thought is considered simply in a logical way, or, more precisely, in an empirically or descriptively logical manner. Consciousness is observing thought to uncover what is lawful in the given facticity of thinking.

This extraction from the phenomena of thinking of what is universal is presented as directly following from the observation of life when it considers the genus process in connection to the rest of organic reality and fails to find any strict lawfulness in the facticity of life. Through this failure, consciousness ends up confronting itself as the object of rational observation, where universality is to be sought in the mind's activity of thinking taken apart from its given embodied actuality and its relation to its world. Only in that inward, yet given domain is observation now certain of finding the rationality that has eluded the being of inorganic and organic nature. This sets the task for consciousness's observation of the laws of thought. In paragraph 298 Hegel speaks of how previously the "observation of Nature finds the Notion realized in inorganic Nature, laws whose moments are things, which, at the same time, had the character of abstractions."<sup>4</sup> The concept, however, did not here have "a simplicity that is reflected into itself."<sup>5</sup> Its unity was not reflected in all the multiplicity of what was theorized about in terms of these abstractions. Life had a unity reflected into itself, but the genus, which provided the universal nature of life, was unable to lay hold of what distinguishes its species or the individuals belonging to them.

Consequently, Hegel notes, "observation finds this free Notion, whose universality contains just as absolutely within it developed individuality, only in the Notion which itself *exists* at Notion, i.e., in self-consciousness."<sup>6</sup>

Consciousness could not find the autonomous universality giving itself its determinacy in life itself, even though the genus presented something universal. That universality did not reach down and penetrate the contingent realization of the genus in species and individuals. Can the observation of self-consciousness uncover the process of the universal determining itself as an objective reality? Is this not what is comprised by the phenomenon of consciousness engaged in thinking? "When observation," as Hegel writes in paragraph 299, "now turns back in upon itself and directs its attention to the Notion existing as free Notion,"<sup>7</sup> it is dealing with thinking as an actual psychological phenomenon.

Since, however, the thinking of self-consciousness is to be observed as something given to consciousness as reason, its true character is to be sought once more by extracting what is lawful in the phenomena. The phenomenon under observation may not be just inorganic nature or a living thing, but the whole framework of observation still involves consequences that make the current quest of descriptive logic equally problematic. Hegel lays out the resulting difficulty very briefly.

Hegel begins by pointing out that consciousness is here observing phenomenal thinking in its own right, rather than observing the thought process in relationship to anything else.<sup>8</sup> This means that although the observed thoughts are being considered apart from what they might be about, that does not mean that they themselves are without truth. They are being considered in a formal way with regard to the formal coherence they might have.

Of course the thought that is here being examined is also the thought of the self-consciousness that is doing the observing. That thought, as reason, is presumed to be objective, to lay hold of reality. The question is, can the thinking of thinking that is here being performed indeed lay hold of the reality it confronts? Can the theorizing observation of thought adequately grasp thought as it finds it?

In paragraph 300, Hegel characterizes how thought appears as a given for observation. Two features are bound up with phenomenal thought being given to observation. On the one hand, the psychological givenness of thinking presents a motionless being of relations and, on the other hand, an aggregate of separated necessities with rigid contents. Observing consciousness uncovers a plurality of different laws of thought. These laws lay hold of the fixed presence of thinking, consisting in an immediate manifold of separated regularities. Each law is a distinct necessity, indifferent to its counterparts.

Why need this be? Why should the psychological phenomenon of thought have a rigid, fixed character for observation? Why should the laws that are discovered have a separate, aggregate character? And why should these features pose a problem for observation in its attempt to validate the descriptive logic it uncovers?

To begin with, if thinking is confronted as something opposing consciousness, as a given phenomenon in the world, it has a given content of its own. It has its own individual reality, which contains a multiplicity of determinations. Otherwise it could not be determinate.

Insofar as these phenomenal thought determinations are present in their given plurality, they are simply adjacent to one another in the space of reason. They are not at hand as a part of a unitary process that generates them in their diversity and gives them some intrinsic connection. Nor do they engender one another. They are simply coeval and distinct, fixed in their motionless diversity. Consciousness faces this manifold of thought with the certainty of finding therein different lawful regularities.

The laws in question cannot help but have the formality that afflicted those laws that consciousness sought in inorganic and organic nature. Observation is directed at uncovering patterns in thought that should apply to any given thinking. Accordingly, these will be laws for the thinking of anything. Since the laws of this descriptive logic apply to individual thoughts, judgments, and inferences whose singular contents are given prior to the abstracting that locates what they share in common, they are empirical laws of formal thought, relative to the data from which they are extracted. Since the regularities they express are found, they have a fixed diversity for which observation can establish no intrinsic connection. Consciousness finds all sorts of determinations that are given in thought and discovers therein a plurality of laws so long as it comes across common marks to associate. The resulting laws are fixed and rigid, abiding by the principle of non-contradiction. They are what they are. They are not what they are not, and insofar as they are not what they are not, they do not transform themselves into anything else. Accordingly, they do not relate themselves to anything else. They just are this given manifold of thinking. Their unity, to the extent that there is any, must be found outside them. Theirs is a subjective connection that observing consciousness imposes upon them, for there is no intrinsic unity, nor any way of establishing their exhaustive character.

Consciousness, however, is at pains to validate the necessity of what it uncovers. Since the thought determinations it observes are merely found, any lawful connections that emerge suffer from the same contingency as those applying to empirical laws of inorganic and organic nature. Once again, consciousness cannot ensure that the discovered rules are really laws that will be exhaustive and not have exceptions.

Consciousness must rely upon introspection, the utterances of others, or any other source that gives direct expression to the form of thought. In no case, nor in any number of cases, can strict universality and necessity be verified.

Hegel observes that the laws of thinking that consciousness culls from its observations are not the truth of thought because "they are supposed to be

merely formal, and to possess no content.”<sup>9</sup> Conversely, the contents from which these forms have been taken are “supposed in their determinateness, or just *as a content* from which form has been removed, to rank as something absolute. In their truth, as vanishing moments in the unity of thought, they would have to be taken as a knowing, or as a movement of thought,”<sup>10</sup> but not to be the laws of knowledge.

These are contents from which form is taken, because, as given, they are not contents that form themselves. A content with form within itself would be a content that orders itself. The given content of thought, however, does not order itself. The plurality of thought determinations and extracted laws does not arrange or determine itself. The laws are determined by the thinking that observes phenomenal thought and describes the patterns and regularities that it uncovers. Moreover, the individual laws are external to one another. They do not connect themselves to one another. They have no way nor power to order themselves. These laws may order the contents that are thought according to their rules, but these laws do not organize themselves or relate themselves to other thought determinations. There are just what they are.

What would it mean for these laws to be vanishing moments in the unity of thought and why would they then no longer be laws of thought, but count instead as knowledge? If they were to be vanishing moments, then in virtue of what they are, they would generate something other than themselves and thereby disappear. None of the emergent content would be extraneous. Rather, everything that emerges and vanishes would be exhaustively determined in and through this process. Life exhibits something akin to this insofar as it is continually altering itself in its metabolic exchange with its environment, growing and reproducing while sustaining its own differentiation into organs whose complementary functioning maintains the unity of the organism. If the thinking under observation were similarly self-altering, it would generate different terms and different relationships, none of which would be laws, because laws remain fixed and apply to things distinct from themselves that they do not exhaustively determine.

The thought under examination enters in as something given, as something to be observed and described through abstraction, resulting in descriptive formal laws of thinking whose unity is contingent and whose contents are extrinsic. What connects them together is the observing consciousness.

Hegel points out that here observation “converts its own nature into the form of *being*, i.e., it grasps its negativity only as the *laws* of knowing. It is sufficient here to have pointed out the invalidity of the so-called Laws of Thought from the general nature of the case.”<sup>11</sup> What is “the invalidity of the so-called Laws of thought from the general nature of the case”? What is “the general nature of the case” that makes what is found to be inadequate?

The mere fact that we have thought grasped as governed by laws that are found and that have an immediate fixed being is the crux of the problem.



Such a thinking cannot generate any content of its own. With fixed, rigid determinations ordered by formal rules indifferent to the contents they order, such thinking is empty and needs some extraneous source such as intuition to give it something about which to think. It lacks precisely the inner difference that has been seen to characterize life, self-consciousness, and universality. As such, the observed character of thinking cannot satisfy the demands of consciousness as reason. The unity of consciousness and self-consciousness that underlies the certainty of observing consciousness mandates that thought be at one with itself as well as at one with what is distinct from itself. Thought that accords with the certainty of consciousness as reason must differentiate itself, giving itself new determination that nonetheless remains at one with it. The universality of thought must thus have individuality, particularizing itself without losing its unity. In this way, thinking retains internal difference, acquiring new content that is pervaded by its identity.

None of this can be true of what observation has found in its depiction of the laws of thought. As Hegel notes in paragraph 301, consciousness experiences that it cannot find the truth of thinking in the descriptive laws that it uncovers. They cannot possibly provide it with an independent reality in which consciousness can be at one with itself.

As a consequence, consciousness directs its observation at self-consciousness in a very different respect. Instead of seeking its truth in a fixed, unmoving aggregate of lawful determinations, consciousness turns its observation to the active, real individuality of self-consciousness. What lies at stake is observing self-consciousness as something individual and actual and related to the world in which it finds itself.

## PART 2

It is difficult to see the explicit move from consciousness's observation of self-consciousness as thinking to consciousness's observation of self-consciousness as acting in the world. What might seem to complicate matters is that, as Hegel points out in paragraph 301, the observation of self-consciousness in its worldly actuality involves acknowledgement that self-consciousness does not cease thinking. Now, this thinking is recognized to be engaged in by an individual who is practically involved with its world, altering its environment. Consciousness now observes that whole process in order to see what laws govern it.

What now is going to be able to exhibit any lawful determination in self-consciousness's observed engagement in the world? What are the given psychological phenomena that are relevant to the epistemological quest of consciousness as reason?

Consciousness as reason turns to observe personality traits in respect to the practical engagements of individuals, with the aim of uncovering some lawful determinations. On the one hand, observation here addresses those psychological characteristics of individuals that pertain to their engagement in the world. These involve not just their thinking and whatever descriptive logical laws apply, but their inclinations, their ways of operating in the world, how they respond to what they encounter, and the habits they acquire. On the other hand, observation considers the world with its mores, customs, and communal structures and traditions. Observing consciousness now must consider what kind of universal relationships will apply between these two sides.

Before observing what happens when consciousness tries to uncover laws in these relationships, Hegel lays out the general options that are to be found. Consciousness is observing the individual as an agent in the world and the world already has a given character of its own, which is confronted by the observed individual who is in the world as well as by the observing consciousness itself. As Hegel notes in paragraph 302, there are two basic ways in which the individual can act in respect to what it finds given in its world. The individual can either conform to the mores of the world it confronts or it can oppose them. Is there any lawful necessity in what happens, given these basic options? When individuals act in conformity with the way of the world, they act upon their own given individuality to mold it to conform to the universal patterns of behavior they find operating in their world. On the other hand, when individuals act against the mores they find in the world, there are two avenues that can be followed, which Hegel distinguishes in terms of the categories of universality and individuality. First of all, individuals can oppose the universal mores of the world in an individual way and engage in what is considered to be crime, the intentional violation of the law. In crime, the individual opposes the universal fabric of the world it confronts as an individual because the individual violates that universal without attempting to transform it. The criminal lets it stand instead of trying to invest its activity with a different universal standing of its own. Individuals can oppose the universal, however, in a fundamentally different, non-criminal manner by trying to establish a new universal way of the world. Here the individual makes its individual activity alter the universal mores or laws by engaging in what could be called reformist or revolutionary activity, depending upon the scope of its ambition.

We have here, then, the general options and the question is, what can be observed to be lawful in these engagements? The individual is observed to have a given array of particular psychological characteristics with which it confronts a world with given mores of its own, leaving the individual to conform to what it finds in the world or to oppose that world, either by personally violating its mores and committing crime or by acting to alter

universally those mores. Given these alternatives, can consciousness as reason find anything more of a necessary character in what actually proceeds? Are there any laws that can apply to how individuals contend with the world they confront?

Hegel proceeds to show how consciousness as reason finds itself unable to discover any laws governing actual self-consciousness in its worldly involvements, despite all the efforts of psychologists and social scientists to do just that. The problem that consciousness here confronts revolves around the inherent contingency in how individuals behave in face of their given circumstances. It may well be that what individuals do reflects the character of the world they find themselves in, for they cannot conform or rebel against mores that do not exist. Nonetheless, the character of those mores cannot dictate by itself that individuals all subscribe to them or that they all reject them. The same contingency applies to how the given psychological characteristics of individuals influence their behavior with regard to prevailing custom. Although how existing mores influence an individual really depends upon how the individual apprehends and reacts to them, observation can never verify that this response is lawfully determined by the psychological traits of the individual. Not only do all past and present observations lack any binding predictive power over future observations, but any psychological determinism that lets psychological traits dictate conduct undermines the autonomy that would allow consciousness to find itself in what it observes. Moreover, as Hegel notes, observing consciousness finds a multitude of disparate passions, inclinations, and dispositions in actual individuals that hardly drive those individuals in one direction alone.<sup>12</sup> There is no pre-stabilized harmony at work. Whether the conflicting urges of an individual tend in one direction or another appears contingent, just as does how those urges vary from moment to moment. In the end, it is the independent initiative of the actual individual that appears to have the last word.

Instead of discovering any lawful relationship governing actual self-consciousness in its relation to the world, observing consciousness thus finds that whatever happens occurs in virtue of the individual, taken as an independent actuality in its own right. So the question for consciousness is now whether any law can be found if its observation turns to the living individual in its own concrete reality. Answering this problem occupies the third section, which is by far the longest of the whole observation of the actuality of self-consciousness. This final development recounts what occurs when observation addresses the relation of consciousness to its own immediate actuality, an exploration that will cover physiognomy and phrenology.

Hegel introduces this final move in paragraph 309. He notes that psychological observation finds no law governing the relationship of self-consciousness to the reality of the world facing it. Instead, observation encounters an indifference between them, for there is no verifiable necessity guaranteeing

that, given the character of the world, the individual is going to develop in this or that way. Rather, what the individual becomes and how the individual is influenced by existing mores is determined by the actual individual. Once consciousness experiences this truth, it is compelled to seek the truth of reason in the individual's own actuality.

The individual, as a living actuality, has distinct aspects and consciousness must see whether these are susceptible to a theoretical treatment. The aspects in question are akin to those in play when consciousness observed the relation of the individual to the world it confronts. Paragraph 310 describes the dimensions that the individual presents to observation as an actuality in its own right, giving the instinct of reason something to theorize about in search of any inherent lawfulness. Hegel distinguishes, on the one hand, the free activity of the individual from, on the other hand, what the individual is itself apart from what it does. The latter comprises the given character the individual has, the original endowment it possesses in distinction from what features it takes on through its activity. As Hegel notes, this original character of the individual is distinguished from the activity of the individual similarly to how circumstances outside the individual were distinguished in observation's previous attempt to understand what influences the individual's behavior. Here, too, the task of observation is to consider these two sides and theorize their relationship. What then is the true relationship between what the individual is "originally" and its activity? Is there any law to be found?

First of all, observation must lay hold of what is the given, original character of the individual apart from its activity. Obviously this must be ascertained in order to then determine its relation to individual activity. Yet where is observation to find this primordial determination of the individual that precedes its activity, this, its "what it has not done," its "*Nicht-gehaben*"?<sup>13</sup> The obvious place to look is at the individual's given facticity, its body. The body is the given shape the individual inhabits and through which it acts. As such, the body is equally an expression of the agency of the individual, the sign of its indwelling individuality. Indeed, this is the rub that poses difficulties for clearly distinguishing the original endowment of the individual from what it owes to its own activity.

In paragraph 311, we are presented with the factors to be observed and how consciousness copes with considering them in their relation to one another, as well as in connection with the terms that came up before. The various universal features of the encompassing world and the particular situations encountered can all be reflected in how individuals have cultivated themselves and to what they have reacted. All of this can be observed to enter variously into the formation of the individual. Consciousness can hardly deny that in some respect the individual exhibits its being in the world, showing the mark of its cultural milieu in all sorts of ways. On the other hand, there is the individual's own free activity, considered to reflect not

anything outside itself, but its own determination. So we have the actuality of the individual involving its body, the impacts of external circumstances, and its own activity.

A certain kind of relationship is going to be invoked by observing consciousness throughout the whole experience that follows. It involves a transmutation of what arose in the previous shape, where the relationship had to do with the individual as an acting agent vis-à-vis the world. Here, observation addresses what occurs within the perimeter of the individual actuality of the agent. A simple relationship keeps on being mentioned over and over again and it is so elementary that one might feel that it is not worth noting. This is the relation of inner and outer. Consciousness is observing the entire individuality of an actual self-consciousness. That is the object. On the one hand, consciousness confronts its outer whole. As paragraph 312 documents, this outer whole combines two things: the given body of the individual as it has naturally matured and the body as it has been shaped by external influences, be they cultural or not. Consciousness confronts both the cultivated and the uncultivated outer being of the individual. This stands in contrast to what lies within the actual individual—the individual as a conscious agent that informs this outer expression of itself.

As Hegel points out, this inner dimension is no longer something merely formal, lacking a content and determinate activity of its own.<sup>14</sup> This inner is not akin to force, which is only manifest in its expression as its positor. Here the outer dimension of the natural and cultivated body is also an expression, but it is an expression of something that already has a given character of its own apart from its embodiment.

The relation of inner and outer concerns the activity of the actual self-consciousness and in this connection, observation must deal with the deeds that the individual performs. The deed is what is achieved through activity and it depends upon the outer dimension of the actual individual serving as an expression for its inner agency. The outer dimension is the organ of activity in the way in which the mouth becomes the organ of speech and the limbs operate as the organs of labor. Each of these aspects of the individual's outer dimension is animated by an indwelling activity that employs it for its expression.

Although the living individual makes use of its outer being as an organ of its activity, the activity has an outward reality of its own, which Hegel calls the deed or the "*Tat*" in German. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel distinguishes the deed (*Tat*) from the action (*Handlung*).<sup>15</sup> This distinction plays a crucial role within morality, the specific mode of self-determination where individuals hold one another accountable for what they do on purpose and for those consequences of their actions that they intended. The deed here signifies what the individual does, what the individual causes, whereas the action consists in that part of the deed, that part of what has been brought into

being through the causality of the individual, that is prefigured in his or her purpose. In moral interaction, individuals hold one another responsible only for that part of their deed that is an action. In other words, moral subjects recognize one another to be morally accountable only for what they do on purpose. This can be extended to a further level by recognizing how the consequences of individuals' deeds are caught up in all sorts of contingencies, where doing something sets in motion all sorts of unintended consequences. Those consequences that were intended are prefigured in the intention underlying the purpose. When one acts on purpose, the deed one performs has certain intended consequences, which comprise the intention or motivation underlying the purpose that is expressed in the action. What one did one did on purpose and that purpose had a motivating intention, consisting in the achievement of certain further ramifications of one's action. Although what one does on purpose may set off all sorts of consequences, morality holds one responsible only for those ramifications of what one does on purpose that are prefigured in one's intention. By contrast, property rights involve strict liability, where owners are held responsible for any harm that their property causes to occur, whether intended or not by the owner. Similarly, one could find oneself in the pre-moral, ethical world of Oedipus and be blamed for something that one did not intend because one did not quite know that one was sleeping with one's mother and murdering one's father.

All this is worth mentioning because the deed (*Tat*) is here spoken of in terms of this contrast with action (*Handlung*). The deed is what happens when the individual acts. The activity is performed and it takes on an actuality of its own, subject to all sorts of entanglements beyond the purpose and intention of the agent. As Hegel writes in paragraph 312, "the externality, which the inner obtains through them is the action as a reality separated from the individual."<sup>16</sup> It is that transformation of external circumstances that results from the activity that is undertaken. It is what is accomplished. That can be distinguished from the act itself, as is done in morality, which prescribes that one should be held morally accountable only for what one does on purpose and not for everything one causes to happen. What one directly causes to happen is the deed, which then has further consequences of its own.

Whether moral consideration comes into play or not, the deed becomes in actuality something cut off from the individual. What one does has a reality of its own in the world. One's inner agency makes use of the outward embodiment of the individual and performs a deed that then has its own independent being, with all kinds of contingent consequences and entanglements. Observing consciousness must contend with this distinction of deed and action in considering whether there can be any kind of necessary relationship between the inner and outer dimensions of the actual individual.

As Hegel observes in paragraph 312, the deed can be seen to express the inner both too much and too little. On the one hand, the deed expresses the

inner too much, because the inner breaks out into these expressions, eliminating any real opposition between them and itself. In so doing, it undermines the whole sense of distinguishing inner and outer dimensions of actual self-consciousness. Instead of providing the inner with expression, the outer dimension turns out to be the inner itself. The inner is initially distinguished as an activity for which the outer was the organ by which it can realize itself. Can, however, its activity be distinguished from the actualization of that activity? The activity is not an activity if it remains within the inwardness of the individual, as, for example, a mere inner resolve to act on a certain maxim. The activity is only in its actualization.

Alternately, the deed expresses the inner activity too little, undermining the presence of any relationship between inner and outer. Hegel points to the example of speech in its relation to action. In speech and action, the inner makes itself into something other than itself. It abandons itself to external elements, which invert its significance. Not only must others interpret the meaning of both speech and nonverbal conduct, but these deeds acquire a meaning due to all sorts of factors beyond the individual. What the significance of an act turns out to be can depend upon circumstances having nothing to do with what the individual does, let alone intends. The deed ends up having a double significance, disrupting any application of the categories of inner and outer. Instead of being an organ in which the inner activity of the individual finds expression, the deed has another life of its own.

The experience of this divide between individual activity and the objective significance of the deed leads to a different approach in consciousness's observation of the actual individual. Hegel calls this new tact of observation "physiognomy." Physiognomy still addresses the active individual who is not just a thinker, but an agent possibly engaged in any of the options of conduct that have been observed, be they conforming behavior, crime, or reformist or revolutionary activity. What is distinct about physiognomy is that it looks at the embodiment of the individual as an expression of its inner character. Abandoning the attempt to connect the individual with its deeds in the world, physiognomy turns to the outward being of the active individual. Once more, observation searches for a lawful relation of inner and outer, but these terms now fall within the actual existence of the individual. Whereas before the action in the world had an outer reality extending beyond itself, now the body, the physiognomy of the individual, is the organ of the inner activity of the individual. The physiognomy is here an outer in its own right.

The transition to physiognomy occurs at the end of paragraph 312 and the beginning of 313. Near the close of paragraph 312, Hegel notes that consciousness must look for the inner as it is externally visible, yet still in the individual itself. This is because when consciousness observed the inner as exhibited in a use of the outer as an organ of its expression, consciousness found that it either could not distinguish the outer from the inner or the

connection between the two fell apart. There proved to be no way of encountering the activity apart from what the outer existence was doing, whereas the deed took on a life of its own, which severed it from the intentions of the individual.

So, now consciousness seeks the relationship of outer and inner in the individual itself, rather than lost in some separate deed. As Hegel notes at the opening of 313, the external shape of the individual is now observed to express the inner individuality only insofar as it is neither an organ nor an activity, but only a motionless whole, whose passive subsisting thinghood can alone express the inner activity of the self as a sign. The physiognomy of the individual figures as a sign of the individual's inner life because it has a sensible subsistence of its own and is completely different from what it signifies. For this reason, the body does not symbolize the inner spirit of the individual, for a symbol has a content that has some connection to what it symbolizes. By contrast, the content of a sign is completely indifferent to what it signifies. The connection is extraneous and purely arbitrary. If, however, consciousness is observing the connection of inner and outer in terms of a physiognomy that is just a sign for what lies within, how can such an arbitrary connection of factors external to one another provide for any lawful relationships? As Hegel notes at the opening of paragraph 314, there would seem to be no rational connection of any sort between physiognomy and inner life.

Nonetheless, physiognomy does not operate like astrology or palmistry, where the factors involved are completely external to one another. Here, something different is at stake. Paragraph 316 lays out the basic structure of physiognomy. The body as organ of activity has proven to be incapable of being an expression of the inner because the activity as a deed is merely outer, leaving the inner and outer falling apart. The organ must be taken as a middle term for both of them because the activity is operative in the organ and, at the same time, the deed constitutes an externality vis-à-vis the organ. Whereas the deed has an independent being, the organ stays with the individual and exists in him. The body as organ is thus connected to both sides of inner and outer and yet is also different from them.

Hegel describes its role as middle term of inner and outer in paragraph 317. He observes that its existence is not confined to the immediate organ of action because this middle term is the outward expression that is at the same time taken back into the inner, as opposed to being allowed to get separated from the inner, as in the case of the deed. The immediate organ of action could be, for example, the hand if one is using a tool or it could be the mouth if one is speaking. Here, the middle term is something outward but it is not an immediate organ of action. It is distinguished from that which serves as the organ of the activity due to all the ambiguities that come into play when the organ of activity is treated as an expression of the inner. Here we have



something that is outer but distinct from the organ of activity. The physiognomy is going to make manifest what is inner in the outer.

How will this be done? Hegel characterizes the relevant physiognomy as the mere movement and form of the face itself.<sup>17</sup> It is here that the inwardness of the individual makes itself manifest in an outward way, without letting its outer expression slip away from it. Of course, there are all sorts of ways in which the outer could fail to express what the agent as inner is intending. Here, however, the individual is reflected in him- or herself, rather than being reflected outwardly into a world where one's activity takes on a meaning completely independent of the individual. Instead, the individual's own physiognomy provides the outward expression in which the individual reflects him- or herself.

As Hegel notes, this passive character of physiognomy makes it akin to a theoretical activity, but one that is visible to others.<sup>18</sup> Physiognomy is an outward expression. Facial expressions play this role insofar as they are not causally involved in producing a deed but rather accompany what is done, thereby allowing the inwardness of the individual to make itself manifest apart from all the ambiguities laying hold of the reality of the deed. Such physiognomic expression can indeed be observed, so that observing consciousness can finally say, "Aha! Here is a necessary relationship between what is inner and outer," which consciousness failed to uncover when it observed the outwardness of the individual in its employment as the organ of a deed. The latter became a problem first because it was unclear how the activity of the organ could really be distinguished from the activity it realizes. Is there really any activity apart from the speaking itself or the use of one's body in manipulating other things? Then, on the other hand, the deed had a reality of its own that became separated from the inwardness it was supposed to express. Can the expression of physiognomy escape these difficulties?

To the extent that the physiognomic expression *accompanies* the body's employment as an organ of the deed, it seems able to manifest the agent's reflection on what the agent does. Yet, that this expression is different from the organ of the deed, does not itself secure any connection with what is inner. Since, moreover, the physiognomic expression is equally different from what it is supposed to express, it is just a sign. How can observing consciousness validate the relation between the sign and what it purportedly signifies?

How can consciousness pin down the meaning of physiognomic expression when it cannot take its bearings from the deed that is being performed, nor from the involvement of the individual in the specific activity that serves as an organ for the deed? Lacking any other observable outer factor that can anchor the connection between this sign and what it signifies, observing consciousness faces two levels of ambiguity. First of all, consciousness faces

uncertainty in knowing whether the physiognomic phenomenon is a reflection of something inner and not just an indifferent, meaningless movement. Consciousness has nothing at hand to guarantee that what it observes is a sign. Second, even if consciousness were somehow certain that the physiognomic expression is a sign for something inner, how can consciousness know what exactly it reflects? Consciousness has turned to physiognomy precisely because it lacks any other outer factor that it can be certain of having any definite connection to what lies within the individual. Moreover, consciousness knows that physiognomy is different from what lies within and that nothing in the expression's content can be the basis for deriving what it signifies. After all, the physiognomic expression is taken to be a sign, signifying something completely other than itself. In appealing to physiognomy, observing consciousness finds itself at an impasse, unable to validate the certainty with which it is operating.

Where then can consciousness as reason turn to find rationality vindicated in the observed actuality of self-consciousness? Consciousness has failed to validate any laws regarding the relationship of actual self-consciousness to its world and consciousness has proven to be no more successful in discovering any necessary determinations regarding the connections of inner and outer in physiognomy.

Hegel follows the experience of physiognomy with that of phrenology. Instead of observing the physiognomic expression with which the individual comports itself in its outer being, consciousness turns to observe something in the individual's own actuality that is once more outer, but completely devoid of any signifying animation. What phrenology considers is not literally dead, for it is still directed to the actuality of self-consciousness, which is the living body. Phrenology, however, limits its view to the bones in the skull, which are still alive, with cells that metabolize, grow and reproduce. Nonetheless, unlike the expressions of the face or the body's general comportment, the skull bones are considered in their rigid immobility, independently of any visible activity.

Right before following this option, Hegel briefly notes that consciousness might be tempted to go back and observe the deed in itself and just identify it with the individual. This would be tantamount to ignoring any independent inwardness of the individual and just doing what was done to Oedipus, judging him by his deed alone. That cannot be a viable option for the specific epistemological challenge facing consciousness as reason, for what its object is in truth must show itself to be at one with the inward unity of self-consciousness. There can be no guarantee that the deed gives the true expression of the individual as self-conscious.

Why then, should consciousness take the path of phrenology and focus its observation on an immobile, thing-like part of the living individual that is neither the organ of activity (head-butting aside) nor an animate expression

of inwardness? Consciousness employs this maneuver to find something observable that will provide it with necessary knowledge about the self-consciousness of the individual. Consciousness has been successively moving farther and farther back from the outer activity of actual self-consciousness, which proved fraught with problems as a vehicle for validating the identity of reason. Now, consciousness has come to the end of the line, turning its attention to that aspect of the actuality of self-consciousness that is maximally devoid of any connection to activity, yet still regarded to provide the truth of the self-conscious individual.

Hegel does mention inner physiological features of the individual, such as the nervous system and the brain in particular to which consciousness might turn to find something revealing the true nature of the awareness of the individual. Although Hegel acknowledges that neurophysiological phenomena may have a special connection to agency, he points out how problematic it would be to try to understand in any lawful way the reality of the self-conscious active agent by observing the brain and the nervous system. He suggests that the only way one could observe the brain and nervous system is to treat them as dead. This might indicate that Hegel is presuming that neurological observation is only possible through dissections of corpses, a presumption that CT and MRI scans make obsolete. It might appear that we now have the technological resources to get around that problem, that now we can observe in live action the neurophysiological realization of the inwardness of the individual. Yet are scans or any other type of observation of the living neurology of the individual sufficient to provide any lawful determination of the essence of self-consciousness? There is something about inward experience that cannot be identified with neurophysiological observations in real time. The latter transpire in spatial juxtaposition to one another over time, presenting neurochemical motions in the physical sense. Neurophysiologists observe these movements and correlate them with observations of other manifestations of behavior, both verbal and non-verbal. They can have someone report what they were thinking at the time of a scan or they can observe subjects saying something or doing something while being neurologically monitored. Then the neurophysiologist associates the observed behavior with the various neural firings that take place in various locations of the brain at different times. Observation can make these connections and then, with repeated observation, come up with laws specifying that certain types of excitations in some specific area of the brain will have something to do with emotions, as opposed to some other behavior. Perhaps neurophysiologists would someday be able to map neurological activity to such a degree that they could identify a particular sequence of neural firings in the cerebral cortex with thinking about sense-certainty in Hegel's *Phenomenology*.

The plasticity of brains might mean that there are all sorts of ways in which the same thought could be realized, but even if one could make defi-

nite correlations, doing so cannot satisfy the quest of consciousness as reason. To begin with, any claim that a certain particular neurological activity was necessarily related to a certain thought or behavior suffers from the uncertainty of any putative law based on observation. No matter how many observations confirm the connection, there is no guarantee that new observations will not contradict it. Moreover, the correlated neurological process and the behavior are different in content and the contents of one cannot be derived from the contents of the other. There is no way to directly convert neurological transmissions into behavior. If behaviors had not been independently observed, neurophysiologists would have no idea to what their scans might be correlated. Observation finds both as givens, immediately present to consciousness. For this reason, it is not technological backwardness that leads Hegel to describe neurophysiological observation as treating its subject matter in a way that removes its specifically animate character. The immediate givens and external correlations of neurophysiological observations simply lack the inner difference common to life and self-consciousness.

Phrenological observation can make use of living subjects, but the nature of its privileged factor also presents an obvious discrepancy with the inner actuality of self-consciousness. To get rid of the uncertainty haunting observation of psychological traits in relation to deeds and of physiognomy, phrenology expressly observes a sheer physical being in the actual individual containing neither reflection nor any conscious feature directly in itself. All such aspects have been removed and the physiognomy has been peeled back to the underlying skull, whose shape, bumps, and depressions can be mapped just as can the neural firings of certain sections of the brain. In both cases, observation finds a physical pattern that is not itself an awareness or anything of that sort. Nonetheless, like patterns of brain activity, the depressions of the skull are associated with psychological dispositions, underlying types of behavior. Insofar as these physical traits and the associated dispositions are completely heterogeneous, with no intrinsic relation to one another, phrenological explanation can always invoke its skull configurations to explain the presence just as much as the absence of certain behavior. Even when it links some bump to some disposition, phrenology can always appeal to intervening circumstances to explain the success or failure of correlated propensities to manifest themselves. The necessity of any lawful connection disappears in a welter of arbitrariness.

These contingencies are indicative of how phrenological observation is no more satisfactory than physiognomy. Hegel, however, presents the experience of phrenology as a turning point. Phrenology's attempt to observe the truth of actual self-consciousness in a bone does something that brings the development to a head and undermines the project of observation in its entirety.

Clearly, there is something problematic about trying to find something as utterly thing-like as a skull to be the true expression of the reality of self-consciousness. Such a factor is just an immediate thing, explicitly removed from expressive movements of physiognomy, the real activity of the body as an organ of activity, and the inner differentiation of the unity of self-consciousness.

Starting in paragraph 343, Hegel goes over the whole development of observation to the point of its culmination in phrenology as it arises from physiognomy. Phrenology, he notes, articulates the concept of observation that has underlain all its shapes. Phrenology does so by locating the outer immediate actuality of self-consciousness not as an organ, nor as a sign, but simply as a dead thing. In all its shapes, observation has sought to validate the certainty of reason in an objective actuality. Throughout, observation has operated with the presumption that self-consciousness has being and that being is at one with self-consciousness. Insofar as observation regards being as something immediately given, its certainty of reason is tantamount to the credo that self-consciousness is nothing more than a thing. In sum, observation treats reason's identity of consciousness and self-consciousness, or of what is given and self-consciousness, as something confronting it in the form of being.

Phrenology has now made explicit for consciousness both that this assumption underlies all its observation and is ultimately unworkable. In phrenological observation, consciousness has made its object the certainty with which its observation has labored, the certainty that the truth of reason is to be found in some immediate thing, in what is immediately given. By coming to this stage and confronting the defining presumption of observation in its bare bones, consciousness has equally discovered its untenability. In phrenology, consciousness thematizes the entirety of what observation has been going through. When the experience of phrenology reveals how ludicrous observation's whole enterprise is, consciousness must grasp that it is time to move on.

The impending development of consciousness as reason will forego observation entirely. Instead of searching for the unity of reason as something given in objectivity, consciousness will now bring the unity of reason into the world by transforming it.

## NOTES

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), bk. 5, chap. 1, 1129b1, p. 68.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 341, p. 207.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 342, p. 207.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 298, p. 180.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 298, p. 180.

6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 298, p. 180.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 299, p. 180.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 300, p. 181.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 300, p. 181.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 300, p. 181.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 300, p. 181.
12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 303, p. 182.
13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 310, pp. 185–86.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 311, p. 186.
15. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. N. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), para. 117, p. 144.
16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 312, p. 187.
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 318, p. 190.
18. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 317, p. 190.

## *Lecture 9*

# **Reason as Self-Actualization of Self-Consciousness**

### PART 1

Ever since our phenomenological investigation left behind consciousness and self-consciousness to enter the domain of consciousness as reason, we have been observing shapes of consciousness that in one important respect aspire to overcome the opposition of consciousness. All those shapes grouped under the heading of reason exhibit this aspiration by taking the object they confront to be the category, which represents the removal of any opposition between knowing and its object. The category does so by comprising the unity of the relation of knowing to itself and the independent givenness of objectivity. Consciousness as reason's certainty that the object is the category is the presupposition of idealism, which regards what is to be in immediate identity with reason. This certainty is also the basic proviso of rationality to the extent that rationality operates with a thinking that is objective, a thinking that lays hold of objects as they are in their independent givenness. Such reason is certain of having overcome the predicament where thought is not objective, but finds itself dealing with something opaque to thinking, something that is unavailable to reason and ultimately absurd.

Nonetheless, consciousness as reason takes the category to be something of which it is certain only in confrontation with the given. Consciousness as reason is certain that the given it confronts is something that is to be in unity with it, but the mere certainty of that unity is, as we have seen, itself empty. It does not provide any specification of the content of the given in its unity with knowing, where knowing finds itself in what it knows as opposed to itself. The whole presumption underlying all observation, whether it addressed nature or self-consciousness in its various forms, always involved confronting

the unity of the category as something that was given, something that was there to be found in the form of being. It just is and, as such, is ready to be observed.

So observation was concerned throughout with finding the category in the given, engaging in various voyages of discovery seeking validation of its certainty that what is is something that exhibits the unity between the object and the knowing that can know itself insofar as it knows what is independently given. The experience of all these forms of observation presented, however, a parade of shapes where what was confronted could never quite be shown to exhibit the unity of the category. This discrepancy came to a head when observation, as phrenology, seemed to have really reached its ultimate reconciliation by finding self-consciousness before it as a thing, as something in the form of being. Such phrenology might appear to be the fulfillment of observation's entire enterprise, confronting consciousness with the very principle of observation, that the category is to be found as immediately given, as in the form of being. What consciousness experienced, however, was that being could not possibly be the form in which the unity of reason could be encountered. Rather, the immediate being associated with self-consciousness presented consciousness with the greatest discrepancy. The inanimate being of the bone in which self-consciousness was supposed to find itself is completely antithetical to the process of internal difference of the concept and self-consciousness. That process needs to be present in the object for self-consciousness to be able to relate to itself therein and this presence is completely absent in the skull that phrenology offers observation.

This emergent requirement pushes consciousness to pursue a whole new way of validating reason. No longer will consciousness proceed with observation, where the unity of self-consciousness and consciousness, that is, of knowing's relation to itself and what confronts knowing, is sought for in the given. Instead, the unity of reason is something that consciousness is going to produce through its own efforts. The unity of reason is recognized to be something that cannot be immediately given, but must be mediated. It is something that has to involve the overcoming of givenness. Accordingly, consciousness will cease engaging in a voyage of discovery, in passive observation, and instead pursue a new enterprise still falling under the rubric of reason. Now, consciousness will try to find reason in objectivity in virtue of consciousness's own doing, whereby it overcomes what it finds given and brings something else into being.

Hegel titles his observation of the shapes that immediately follow, "The actualization of rational self-consciousness through its own activity." In the opening paragraph, 347, of this new section, Hegel looks back over the preceding itinerary of observation, so as to set in relief the new threshold that has been reached. He recounts how self-consciousness, having found the thing as itself and itself as the thing, could not find in this unity the validation



of the category. This experience leads now to a recoil, where consciousness as reason regards immediate being in general as something that must be overcome to secure the realization of the category. Instead of observing objectivity as it is given, consciousness now regards it as only the appearance or show of what is the essence of self-consciousness. This is to be shown by bringing out what underlies the given as its true essence and this requires the activity of consciousness. Now the operative presumption of consciousness is that this bringing out of the essence of objectivity is the work of self-consciousness because the independent being of the given does not contain that process within it. Consciousness must effect this transformation by engaging in an activity that is external to what it acts upon.

Further, insofar as the activity transforms the given to result in the mediated being that can be at one with self-consciousness, that product does not contain within itself the activity the produces it. In other words, what consciousness as reason now attempts to realize is not something that contains the activity of its own realization.

These features will prove to be fatefully fundamental to all the shapes that proceed in this manner. Notably, these features are precisely what cease to be at hand in the shapes of spirit or generally in ethical life or, as it might also be called, ethical community. In the shapes of spirit, consciousness will engage in activity that will not be external to the objectivity it confronts, nor produce something in which it is not contained. Rather, consciousness as spirit will have as the end of its activity realizing something that contains in itself the process of its realization.

By contrast, what here lies at stake is a certain way of construing activity that much contemporary ethics employs in thinking about conduct. This approach conceives practice to be external to the world it acts upon and to aim at bringing about something that does not contain the activity that brings it about.

Hegel tells us in paragraph 347 that the object to which self-consciousness here positively relates itself is another self-consciousness. He maintains that this is entailed insofar as the objectivity that self-consciousness confronts is something that counts only insofar as it presents a show whose essence is really self-consciousness. What self-consciousness can here really be relating itself to is just self-consciousness.

This will be true throughout all of the forms that we here encounter and we need to ask why this should be the case. Why is it that in every shape in which rational self-consciousness is engaged in actualizing itself by itself, it acts in relation to other self-conscious individuals? It is not going to be acting upon things or upon life in general, nor is it going to be engaged in any merely theoretical endeavors. Consciousness instead is always going to be relating to another self-consciousness so as to realize its unity with what independently confronts it.

When we come to observe the shapes of the ethical life of spirit, consciousness will relate to another consciousness whose otherness is the affirmation of the former's self-consciousness. In an ethical community what one does to other individuals is what their independent otherness enables one to do. Here, the given independent being of the other self-consciousness does not immediately realize the consciousness that relates to it. The consciousness that relates to this other subject has to do something to it and what it does to it is not something facilitated by the independence of the other.

Consciousness as reason confronts another self-consciousness that faces it in the form of thing-hood. It is independent, but consciousness has the certainty, as rational, that this other self-consciousness is ultimately not foreign to it, is something in which it can find itself, in which it can realize itself, in which it can be self-realized. Still, consciousness is not yet recognized by the other and does not have its self-consciousness realized in it. Rather, this other confronts consciousness as a subject to whom consciousness must act so as to actualize itself as reason.

This undertaking progresses through successive stages. As Hegel points out in paragraph 348, the development in question has as its goal the achievement of unification, where consciousness, in confronting another consciousness, succeeds in being at one with itself in its relation to the other. That goal is described by Hegel under the rubric of spirit.

Spirit has been mentioned on various occasions in the preceding observations, but it has not yet been thematic. So far, spirit figures only as a topic that Hegel reflects upon by way of anticipation. Spirit has not yet emerged as an object proper for consciousness. At the various junctures where we have observed self-consciousness relating to another self-consciousness, reciprocity has never fully been achieved so that consciousness can verify itself as a "we" that is "I" and an "I" that is "we."

Consciousness is here certain that what it confronts in acting upon the other self-consciousness is, in truth, itself. When, in paragraph 348, Hegel describes the way stations in the actualization of this end, he is not describing the three sections in the actualization of rational self-consciousness by way of itself. He is instead characterizing a development that is going to take us into the section of reason that will be labeled "Spirit." This is because there are going to be two sections of reason that precede spirit, the one here underway, "The actualization of rational self-consciousness through its own activity," and another section following this, "Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself."

Hegel begins paragraph 348 by pointing out that observing reason recapitulated the movements of consciousness within the element of the category. The successive shapes of observation incorporated the development from sense-certainty to perception to understanding, but with regard to a different type of object, namely, an object exhibiting the unity of the category. Now

consciousness as reason is going to do something similar with regard to the two successive developments of self-consciousness. Earlier, as we have observed, the shapes of self-consciousness unfolded in two series of movements. One was presented under the heading of the independence and dependence of self-consciousness and involved desire, then the struggle of life and death, and finally mastery and servitude. Then there was a further development of shapes of self-consciousness under the rubric of the freedom of self-consciousness, where stoicism, skepticism, and the unhappy consciousness followed. Hegel's suggestion that what now develops will somehow incorporate these earlier shapes is just a promissory note and we will have to see how this works out. For the present, we will want to consider whether the development of consciousness that now seeks to make the given rational through its own activity will replay in the modality of reason what was observed in the first series of shapes of self-consciousness—namely desire, the life and death struggle, and the interaction of master and servant.

What here lies at hand for our observation is, as Hegel puts it in paragraph 348, an active, rather than observing reason. This active reason, he notes, is conscious of itself only as an individual and it is seeking, as such an individual, to actualize itself in what confronts it and thereby validate its certainty that what is is rational. In doing so, Hegel suggests by way of anticipation, consciousness will elevate itself into universality, becoming a universal reason consciousness of itself as uniting all self-consciousnesses and achieving recognition in and for itself.<sup>1</sup> We will see, however, that what Hegel here anticipates is not what occurs in the three sections of "the Actualization of rational Self-consciousness through its own Activity." Rather, it concerns what arises from the sections of "Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself" that follow these.

Here, in the shapes of "the Actualization of rational Self-consciousness through its own Activity," we are dealing with a self-actualization where the self in question is actualizing itself as an individual. By contrast, in the shapes of "Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself," the actualization in question is going to involve a self that already counts as universal and thereby stands in a very different relationship to what it confronts.

All this will lead to what Hegel here describes as a simple spiritual essence, which is going to follow from these two sections of reason. This "spiritual essence" will provide the goal to which this development is moving. Hegel devotes the four following paragraphs to sketch out this goal and it is important to keep in mind that what he describes lies ahead of the observations we are about to begin. If Hegel feels that a brief anticipation of spiritual essence is worth introducing here, it will be to help clarify what lies at hand by drawing a contrast to the very different kind of unification that spirit and ethical life or ethical community will subsequently exhibit.

In paragraph 349, Hegel characterizes “*Sittlichkeit*,” which can be translated as “ethical life” or, perhaps more clearly, as “ethical community.” “*Sitten*” is sometimes translated by “ethos,” but it could equally be translated by “custom.” When Hegel speaks of ethical community he has in mind a form of association whose participants determine one another as universal self-consciousnesses. They are universal self-consciousnesses precisely in that they relate to other self-consciousnesses in a form of reciprocity in which they relate to others as these others relate to them. In so doing, each participant exhibits the very same type of awareness and engagement, pursuing roles that perpetuate the association of which they are a part. Their association is thereby just as much the presupposition as the result of their activities, which are such that they can only be exercised within the community they sustain. The members of such a community can regard themselves as universal self-consciousnesses precisely because their relation to others is one in which they are relating to themselves as knowing and acting in the same way as their counterparts.

Hegel here presents this form of association in a very formal way, leaving out of account the determinate filling of the roles in question. Nonetheless, as Hegel points out in paragraph 354, an actual ethical community does have a determinate content, involving specific customs and laws, which the mere idea of ethical community does not specify.

The presence of content extraneous to the concept of ethical community is exhibited in the contemporary ethical theory of communitarianism. Communitarianism maintains that any attempt to uphold valid norms by relying on a conception of the self that is not a part of an ethical community leads to norms that are ultimately subjective in character. To some degree, the communitarian critique of an individualist ethic exposes the kind of pitfalls to be observed in the shapes of “the Actualization of rational Self-consciousness through its own Activity.” Communitarianism, however, acknowledges that although membership in ethical community involves acting in recognition of shared practices that, in virtue of their being shared, automatically have a non-subjective character, the concept of an ethical community leaves completely up for grabs what the content of those shared practices will be. Accordingly, communitarianism has nothing more to say about their content and cannot prescribe what they should be, given its guiding formal principle of ethical community. Whatever content the shared norms of ethical community may have is acknowledged to be a historically given contingent fact.

That contingency creates problems for the claims of objectivity of ethical community and these problems are precisely of the sort that Hegel makes thematic in paragraph 355. There he notes that the individual member of an ethical community can always reflect about its common practices and withdraw recognition of their validity. This can be done precisely because the very notion of ethical community does not itself carry with it any necessary

content regarding the norms and specific practices with which its members unite.

How could this possibly be an adequate form of normativity? If ethical community were basically formal in character, being merely the idea of a community whose members interact in recognition of shared ends and, in doing so, reproduce the whole to which they belong, the content of its norms would be arbitrary and lack any genuine objectivity. Members of a particular ethical community would be at a loss to justify its normative superiority over any other ethical community with a different content. One's ethical community could always be supplanted with another and there would be no reason why the new order would be any less valid than that with which one began. How then could members regard the community to which they belong as having any hold upon them than an accident of history?

This contingency of content is the basic pitfall of communitarianism, which renders it really a form of nihilism. Like so much other contemporary ethics, it takes the forms of argumentation of ethical theories and historicizes them, as Rawls does for social contract theory by employing it as something that serves to help us think consistently about our shared moral intuitions. His appeal to historically given commonly recognized norms via "reflective equilibrium" makes him a bedfellow to communitarian historicism.

In paragraph 356 Hegel notes that we are not here dealing with a consciousness that has withdrawn from ethical community after calling into question the arbitrary contingency of its norms. Rather, we are observing a shape of consciousness that has not yet attained the unification where rationality comes to have an objective realization. It is a consciousness whose individuality is not mediated by its relationship to others. It does not possess an individuality that involves its universal association with others. It simply has a given individuality and it confronts a world that it simply finds, a world that is in no way related to it in any intrinsic way. Nevertheless, as reason, consciousness regards its world to not have any intrinsic otherness. That is, the otherness it confronts is in principle transformable and removable.

In other words, consciousness, as an individual confronting an objectivity whose immediacy is something in which it does not find itself, is here certain that it can find itself by transforming the world it confronts. Accordingly, consciousness is set to intervene in the world to which it belongs and find itself through its own activity. If consciousness is going to transform the world that it confronts, what is given cannot exhibit how what truly is is at one with self-consciousness. For consciousness, what it immediately confronts is not what truly is. It will be made what truly is. It will be made rational by the intervention of the individual. This individual, however, is just an individual and if it is going to actualize itself, it is going to do so merely as an individual. Accordingly, its goal is to become consciousness through its own activity of its own individual actuality in what it confronts.

This involves a certain ambiguity. As Hegel notes toward the end of paragraph 356, the correspondence between consciousness and thing-hood is already at hand and it merely has to come to be by way of consciousness itself. For this reason, Hegel paradoxically claims, here the producing of the unity whereby consciousness makes what it confronts at one with itself, is just as much the finding of the unity.

The unity in question is called happiness or "*Glück*." Why would "happiness" be relevant here? As Aristotle says, happiness can mean many different things.<sup>2</sup> In this context, however, happiness means something specific that is very much tied to the situation at hand. Here the actualization of the self through its own activity is what would be equivalent to the achievement of happiness.

Happiness is at stake due to the consciousness in question being an immediate individual, whose self-actualization centers around its immediate drives and impulses. It is the realization of these in another self that comprises the particular way in which the rationality of the world is going to be validated. Consciousness is seeking to find itself in the world as a result of its own activity and the self it is seeking to realize is simply individual without any further intrinsic connection to anything else.

The quest is one in which the individual sets forth in the world to seek happiness. The achievement of happiness is to be considered something produced by the activity of the individual yet no less something that the individual finds. The realization of happiness is considered to be in some respect implicit or inherent in what consciousness confronts. This dual character of consciousness's self-actualization being produced and found is going to figure in the other forms it takes in the shapes that follow.

Why is there this dual form and what does it signify? The certainty that motivates this shape regards what confronts consciousness as being in truth in accord with consciousness in its individuality. What immediately opposes consciousness is a phenomenal surface that cannot in principle resist the self-actualization of the former. Accordingly, what confronts consciousness contains within itself the satisfaction to be achieved. It already is in principle in unity with consciousness and thereby has rationality.

The individuality of consciousness here has a given, natural character. Consciousness has natural impulses. They are natural insofar as they are not artificial or convention, mediated by willing. They simply are part of the given fabric of the individual. Instead of being the result of an engaging in activity, they are the given basis from which consciousness's self-actualization proceeds.

In paragraph 359, Hegel gives a preliminary sketch of the three sections into which the ensuing development will unfold.

To begin with, we have a consciousness with given individual aims of its own confronting a reality whose given immediacy it must overcome to actu-

alize its aims. Hegel describes this actualization process in very abstract terms, noting that consciousness's initial purpose is to intuit its immediate abstract being-for-self, confronting it as something objective in another self-consciousness. Insofar as consciousness relates to itself in an immediate manner in the fulfillment of natural desire, what lies at stake is consciousness actualizing its own natural urges and impulses in another individual. That is where its pleasure is to be had. It is in this specific sense that self-actualization takes the form of a pursuit of happiness.

Through the experience of the limitations of this endeavor, consciousness next seeks to realize itself in others as something both universal and immediately present in itself. Hegel will characterize this pursuit as the actualization of the "law of the heart" because here self-consciousness still has a given individuality, but regards it as being no less universal and deserving realization as a law. Here, consciousness turns to its own feelings to determine what the law should be and then seeks to realize that law in a world that has no necessary conformity with consciousness's own individuality, which consciousness now regards to be universal. Consciousness will experience that in realizing its "law of the heart" it cannot preserve its own individuality and validate its certainty.

This outcome will lead to a standpoint that takes what is rational to be something realizable only through the self-sacrifice of individuality. In this way self-consciousness will uphold its virtue over and against the way of the world, which it knows to be indifferent to virtue, yet at the same time, conformable in principle with virtue. Once more, consciousness operates with the underlying certainty that objectivity can become rational through the engagement of the individual.

Hegel titles the first section, "Pleasure and Necessity" and it is the most perplexing of the three primarily because its presentation is so condensed. Very little is offered to indicate exactly how it proceeds. The title gives us two factors to consider—pleasure and necessity. It is no easier to figure out what exactly this pleasure is and how it realizes itself, than to determine what the necessity is that becomes connected to it.

In paragraph 360, Hegel turns to observe a self-consciousness that regards itself as what is fundamental, yet recognizes that it is not yet realized in the actuality it confronts. This self-consciousness is concerned, Hegel notes, with being able to intuit itself as another independent essence. Its driving purpose is to become consciousness of itself as an individual essence in another self-consciousness.

Why does Hegel invoke intuition here? Why is self-consciousness concerned with being able to intuit itself rather than to conceive itself as another independent essence? Intuition is the type of mental content that is in immediate relation to the object it is about. Conceiving oneself would not suffice because consciousness here has to realize itself and find itself as an existing

actuality. This actualization thus has to be intuited rather than merely thought.

The task facing consciousness is to find itself in its object by removing the immediate appearance that what opposes it is something indifferent to it. In paragraph 361, Hegel briefly depicts what lies at stake. Here we have an individual plunging into the world to seek its happiness by taking rather than making its pleasure. The pleasure is something to be taken rather than produced because it is already implicitly present. Although consciousness must perform an activity to realize itself, that activity is not one that makes its object of satisfaction. The nature of this activity does not fit that of the slave who imposes form upon material in service of the needs of a master. Rather, the activity achieves its goal by occasioning the activity of another.

In paragraph 352, Hegel clarifies matters by noting that the act that is engaged in is only in one respect an act of desire. Unlike the activity satisfying appetite, it does not cancel the entire objectivity of that in which it takes its pleasure. Rather, it only cancels the form of otherness of this factor, whose independence is regarded by consciousness to be a mere show, devoid of any essential being. Nonetheless, consciousness still has to do something to have this truth come out. Consciousness may not engage in consuming or making its object of pleasure, but it must engage in taking it.

This is not a fulfillment of hedonism in general, which can involve any pleasures, including those that consume their object. It rather involves a taking pleasure that involves another consciousness. This seems to require some sexual activity, but not any. Rape, for example, would not qualify, for the pleasure must in some respect be already inherent in the other subject, rather than something externally extracted through force.

Are we observing an attempt at seduction, such as Don Giovanni performs as a career, where the seducer takes what is made to offer itself, where the seducer makes happen what is just as much a found opportunity requiring no compulsion? Hegel does not specify much in the way of details, but the “taking pleasure” seems to fit the activity of a seducer. One could look at Kierkegaard’s writings for further illustration of such a standpoint.<sup>3</sup> Kierkegaard often commandeers for his own purposes shapes of consciousness that Hegel uses in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In any event, Hegel has warned us that the “taking pleasure” is not merely desire, obliterating the form of otherness of its object. Nor is it a forming of the object in the way in which labor alters some material. Rather, consciousness is here taking a satisfaction that does not require consuming its object or putting a new form upon it.

The outline of this self-actualization is sketched in paragraph 362. In this taking, rather than making of pleasure, the individual is seeking to intuit its own self in the other. Consciousness is taking pleasure in its actualization in another consciousness that appears to be independent. This other self *ap-*



*pears* to be independent insofar as it has an opposing otherness, yet allows consciousness to realize its own immediate desires in its relation to it. The outcome of this relation, Hegel tells us, is not the actualization of consciousness's initial purpose, but rather the sublating of it. Self-consciousness does not become an object to itself but faces something else. The aim of successful seduction is to intuit oneself in the other, but consciousness encounters something different.

The taking of pleasure involves the unity of consciousness and the other self-consciousness. By enabling consciousness to intuit itself in the other, this unity is intended to provide the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness in which the actualization of reason resides. In achieving seduction, the individual actually discovers something universal about itself. The realization that it achieves is a shared pleasure. The seducer thus encounters not just itself but its unity with the other, a unity existing in a common taking pleasure. It is no accident that the pleasure be not just the singular pleasure of the individual. The taking of pleasure as a found opportunity ensures that the seducer's satisfaction be in unity with that of the seduced. The satisfaction is not unilateral, nor coerced. The seducer must arouse the desire of the other to seduce him or her and seduction only succeeds because the desire is reciprocated.

Consequently, the very achievement of this taking of pleasure achieves something different from what it sought. Consciousness has failed to realize itself as it originally intended. Instead of intuiting itself in its natural, singular immediacy, consciousness ends up actualizing something universal rather than individual.

## PART 2

In taking pleasure, consciousness does not undermine the independence of the other, nor does the other serve the pleasure of the seducer at the expense of its own satisfaction. In both respects, what is at stake diverges fundamentally from the experience of the master-servant relation. The seduction of taking pleasure involves a kind of mutual satisfaction. Admittedly, the seducer is not aiming at the satisfaction of the seduced. The seducer is not concerned with achieving mutual satisfaction. If it were, its aim would not be the self-realization of its immediate individuality. It would involve the realization of something distinct from itself.

This discrepancy is central to the difficulty that consciousness now experiences. The fulfillment of pleasure turns out to involve a necessity external to its underlying presumption. In paragraph 363, Hegel observes these ramifications by turning to examine the satisfaction of happiness that has occurred. That satisfaction does have the positive significance of enabling the

individual to intuit itself in an other and become an objective self-consciousness, insofar as the seducer takes pleasure in the seduced, who willingly succumbs to the desire of the former. This satisfaction also has a negative dimension, however, that undercuts its own positive achievement. Namely, in seeking to realize itself as individual, the seducer ends up realizing something that is not just limited to its own natural urges. The affirmation of its mere individuality proves to be tied up with something that goes beyond that, lying in the shared pleasure of seducer and seduced. To the degree that consciousness aims to actualize itself in its given individuality, it finds that the achieved realization attains something different.

Consciousness now has to regard what has been achieved as, on the one hand, not being what it takes to be genuinely actual. This is because consciousness is operating with the certainty that what truly is is nothing more than a realization of its own given individual self-consciousness. That presumed truth is what consciousness set out to prove through its activity of finding its pleasure in the world, of satisfying itself in its natural individuality. The actualization of itself on those terms ends up presenting something very different, something that does not count for it even though it is at the same time its own realization. Thereby consciousness confronts something empty and devoid of actuality because what it considers genuinely actual should mirror its own given individuality.

The taking of pleasure, however, results in something that mirrors more than consciousness itself, something that Hegel describes as its consuming power.<sup>4</sup> This is its fate, something that consciousness cannot escape from once it sets out to take its pleasure in the world. It is a necessity that has the pleasure seeking individual in its thrall. Hegel speaks of this in the same paragraph, 363, observing that what becomes the object to self-consciousness in taking its pleasure is the dissemination of what he calls the empty essentialities of pure unity, pure distinction, and relation.

What is the pure unity, the pure distinction, and the relation to which he refers? First of all, there is a pure unity in that both seducer and seduced are both self-consciousness. When individual consciousness takes its pleasure, another pleasure taking occurs from which the former cannot escape in asserting itself. Further, there is a pure difference between seducer and seduced. Their relationship is not mediated by anything else. Yet they are in a relationship that depends upon their difference, upon their having an otherness to one another that provides the basis for their common satisfaction.

Hegel further notes that the object that individual consciousness experiences as its essence has no content. It is what is called necessity, for necessity or fate affects all alike. Consciousness does not know what its determinate laws and positive content are supposed to be, because it is, to paraphrase Hegel, the absence of the pure concept itself, intuited as the empty passive relation whose work is the nothingness of individuality. Or, as Hegel writes

later on in this paragraph, here consciousness has ended up plunging itself into an awareness of its own lifelessness. It has become a participant in an empty and alien necessity. Consciousness, so he observes at the very conclusion of paragraph 364, has gone out to affirm its life but it has laid hold of death, finding its living being inverted into a lifeless necessity that is not mediated through anything.

What is Hegel getting at when he says that this necessity is mediated through nothing? What would mediate it would be something that would combine both factors, but there is no middle term to combine them. There is an immediate identification or coming together of this individuality, which is affirming itself as what is ultimate in actuality, and the other individual through whom it takes its pleasure. The engagement with the other is a necessity to which its self-actualization is immediately bound.

This dual predicament provides the basis of the transition to a new shape of self-actualization, involving a new object for consciousness. This new shape is that of a self-consciousness that regards its own individuality as being a necessity and necessity as being its own individuality. It regards itself as being a law that governs actuality and that certainty is what its own activity seeks to validate. The self-actualization of consciousness is going to affirm that truth and operate on that basis.

What is the necessity that here is tied to the self-actualization of self-consciousness? Is it akin to the fate that afflicted the satisfaction of desire, which always renews itself by consuming its object and falling back into the opposition of a consciousness confronting an object other than itself? Is self-actualizing self-consciousness similarly back where it began after experiencing that its attempt to intuit its own individuality in another really confronts it with a different truth, leaving it to seduce again the same individual or to pursue other conquests?

In every such endeavor, consciousness ends up realizing itself as something more than it takes itself to be. The sense of this being a necessity is just to acknowledge that its own activity brings forth its own externality, that its self-actualization is equally the realization of something that could be regarded as a fate in the sense of being something lifeless for it, something not part and parcel of its own internal differentiation. There is unity as well as difference, with nothing else mediating both sides. We have pure difference and a pure unity because there is no middle term to qualify either.

Moreover, there is no specific content to the relationship. It is completely contingent who the individuals are or what other characteristics they have. Nothing else about them is necessitated by their relation of seducer and seduced. The attractions on either side are opaque to any determining law that could mandate who must be or not be seduced by the next Casanova.

One might be tempted to think that not everything can be contingent and external, for self-actualization has to take place in the world with all its

determinate exigencies. Self-actualization cannot help dealing with all sorts of other things besides the actual act of seduction and pleasure-taking. Maybe it results in sexually transmitted disease or marital conflicts or political scandal. One is moving into externality and this carries with it necessarily all sorts of entanglements. Nonetheless, what these entanglements turn out to be remains contingent.

From the experience of this predicament arises the shape of consciousness that Hegel describes as pursuing the law of the heart. He characterizes this shape as involving a “frenzy of self-conceit,” where consciousness regards its immediate individuality as being the law that genuinely governs its world.<sup>5</sup> Consciousness is here certain that its own immediately given purposes and ends are what should count as necessity, as the ruling law of actuality. Yet consciousness is equally aware that it confronts a world whose given character is just a show, an appearance that, in principle, is transformable into the realization of its law, whose content derives from whatever goals this consciousness happens to have as an individual. Consciousness is set upon fostering that transformation because it embraces the self-conceited enterprise of regarding its own ends and purposes to be universally valid, to be what should govern what is. Hence, consciousness embarks on realizing the law of its heart, the law of what preferences reside in its subjective awareness.

Once more consciousness’s endeavor is concerned with other individuals. We are not observing the pursuit of a law of the heart that mandates drawing Xs on every tree one encounters. The law is specifically directed at doing something with regard to other individuals. Only in impacting their behavior can the realization of the law achieve an actuality in which consciousness can mirror itself and thereby validate the rationality of the world.

The self-actualization of self-consciousness now takes the form of generating an actuality that will exhibit the law of consciousness’s heart. What does that really mean? What is consciousness seeking to do? Is the law of the heart simply a matter of having the individual’s desires being satisfied by others? Would that realize that law and enable consciousness to find itself mirrored in the world?

Consciousness here regards its own immediately given aims as the law and goes out in the world with the certainty and self-conceit to realize that law. Realizing the law of the heart thus seems to be tantamount to having one’s particular ends satisfied by others, since that would make actuality conform to oneself as one here understands oneself.

In that case, however, everyone else would be following the law of one individual consciousness and not the law of their own heart, which need not have any intrinsic conformity to that of any other individual. The lawful behavior of others would then not fully mirror consciousness, since they

would be following a law external to their own consciousness, unlike the self-actualization that imposes its rule upon them.

A more genuine fulfillment of the law of the heart would be sought in the situation where all follow the law of their own heart. This, however, seems to involve a proliferation of goals quite different from that of the preceding pursuit.

Both versions of the law of the heart regard the world individuals confront to not yet operate according to the law. Insofar as this law is held to be true and valid, the world facing individuals is not what it ought to be. It is a world rife with oppression, evil, and whatever else is held to be invalid, a world whose laws do not conform to the law of "my" heart. The quest to realize the law of the heart is therefore a quest to bring to humanity the valid form of life that it is lacking, insofar as one takes one's own purposes to be what should rule. The laws that happen to exist in the world have no intrinsic relationship to the law of the heart. The latter derives its content from the individual consciousness that regards given reality to be just an illusory show, whose transformation to conform to the law of the heart is the task of the individual.

To what degree, then, can the law of the heart, be fulfilled? In paragraph 372, Hegel outlines some of the contradictions that occur in seeking to make this law universally effective. Problems arise at several levels.

The first concerns what takes place if the law of the heart becomes realized. Hegel notes that once the specific ends and purposes of individual consciousness become actualized, they cease to be a law of the heart. As realized, they now comprise an independent existing universal power to which my heart is indifferent since the content of "my heart" is whatever impulses currently occupy my consciousness. Hence, precisely by fulfilling the aims and purposes that I happen to have, I find that I am not realizing myself and that what arises is an order ruled by a law alien to my heart. Simply by taking the form of being, the laws that emanate from my heart cease to be at one with my heart, which is always subject to change. After all, the law of the heart has no fixed character. It is just whatever my heart happens to feel. Once embodied, however, the law takes on a fixed form. It is no longer within my heart, no longer in the flux of my living agency, with its succession of immediate passions and urges. The realized law acquires an externality and fixity, foreign to the inwardness of consciousness. Moreover, as Hegel notes, the individual now confronts the power that has come into being through the realization of the law of the heart, a power that possesses superior strength because it is a rule followed by a prevailing plurality of individuals.

In addition to these dilemmas, there is another nest of difficulties arising from the singular character of the law of the heart. If the law of the heart is realized as a law that all should follow, it turns into a universal license to

impose one's immediate aims upon everyone else, even while they attempt to do the same. This engenders the incipient conflict lurking in the Golden Rule. The latter's injunction to do unto others as you would have them do unto you is a law of the heart, because it leaves completely undecided what you want them to do unto you and vice versa. You might want others to whip you, rob you, kill you, or anything else. The contingency of one's preferences leaves the outcome completely open-ended. Due to the immediate givenness of one's heart, there is nothing that puts the laws of the heart of different individuals in pre-stabilized harmony. The law of one heart need not conform to the law of any other heart. As Hegel observes, the law of the heart becomes a law of all against all, a law of self-conceit that cancels itself in every direction.

The law of the heart thereby inverts itself the moment it becomes followed. It confronts consciousness with an alien order, whose unity with the law of my heart is as capricious as the conformity of my law with any other. Consciousness therefore experiences that the realization of its law of the heart produces the opposite of what it intends, just as the law of force inverted itself.

Hegel goes so far as to describe the resulting funk of consciousness as a kind of madness. As paragraphs 376 and 377 observe, there is something crazy about this whole endeavor to make what is most singular about individual consciousness the law of the world. On these terms, the very affirmation of consciousness's own actuality is its destruction, the canceling, inverting, and subverting of what it takes to be most essential about itself as the fulcrum of rationality. By following the law of its heart, consciousness falls into contradiction with itself in all respects.

The outcome of this madness is something that Hegel calls the "way of the world." This way of the world, which comes up in paragraph 379, is bound up with consciousness's attempt to realize itself as rational. Hegel describes this way of the world as having only a meant universality, a "*gemeinte Allgemeinheit*."<sup>6</sup> In our previous phenomenological observations we have come across various ways in which something has been merely meant. Sense-certainty attempted to mean something, pointing immediately to something individual, but never being able to say what it means.

What is the merely "meant universality" of the way of the world? The way of the world presents itself as the standing public order that is the counterpart of the pursuit by all of the law of the heart. That pursuit comprises, as Hegel puts it, a universal feud, a struggle of all against all, predicated upon individuals doing precisely what Hobbes describes occurring in the state of nature, where individuals all pursue their own ends as if they had a right to do so, as if these were what ultimately counts. That, of course, leads to an existence that is brutish and short. It is a universal, lawful order in name only. Is this existence the way of the world that figures in what follows?

In paragraph 380 Hegel characterizes what consciousness and, more generally, all of those who are pursuing the law of the heart are left with by trying to make the world rational by asserting one's own individual ends and purposes as if they were universally valid. What results is a self-actualization that is just as much non-actual. In trying to realize itself under the banner of the law of the heart, consciousness inverts and subverts itself on all sides. So what is the truth that is experienced by the participants in this way of the world? Consciousness, Hegel observes, comes to know that its individuality is the source of its problem.<sup>7</sup> If consciousness is really going to realize what is universal and actualize anything that can count as valid, it has to sacrifice the given individuality of consciousness. That sacrifice is what consciousness must do to make the world rational and intuit itself therein. Instead of pursuing the law of its heart, consciousness must engage in a struggle for virtue against those who are still occupied with the way of the world, with pursuing their given individuality as if that is what counts. This struggle for virtue comprises the third final shape that self-consciousness takes in trying to bring rationality into the world through its own activity.

### PART 3

The first paragraph of Hegel's observation of the shape of consciousness of virtue and the way of the world, paragraph 381, briefly recapitulates the two shapes of the self-actualization of self-consciousness that have led to this point. To begin with, consciousness sought to actualize its given individuality, an individuality devoid of any universal character and any pretensions of being a law. In pursuing its happiness in another, consciousness sought to realize itself as reason simply as an individual but ended up finding itself enmeshed in a joint indulgence that turned out to be universal. Having experienced this outcome, consciousness then joined its individuality with the universality of law and confronted a world of others that had its own law as well as individuals pursuing their own law of the heart. In virtue of experiencing how the joining of individuality and law ends up contradicting itself, consciousness now engages in pursuing virtue in face of the way of the world. Here, Hegel observes, both sides are each a unity and opposition of the moments of individuality and law.

First of all, consciousness wants to regard itself as pursuing virtue by sacrificing its own individuality and embracing law as the essential. Its individuality is to be overcome in two arenas. Consciousness's individuality is to be overcome in itself, but it is also to be overcome in the world, because the world is regarded to be in truth the actualization of self-consciousness. The self-actualization of self-consciousness is still operating with certainty of the category's identity of reason. Consequently, consciousness's whole effort to

suppress its own individuality on behalf of what is genuinely universal is tied to engendering the same thing in the world and therein actualizing itself. Insofar as consciousness must actualize itself in the world, the world it confronts does not yet have the character reflecting consciousness's own purification. The world it faces is not yet governed by virtue but it should in principle be governable by virtue. There should not be anything about the world that would make the triumph of virtue a hopeless task.

Consciousness, however, is not in a situation of ethical community, where the world already embodies the good that its members pursue. Instead, consciousness finds itself opposing an actuality of which it is not a part, attempting to produce something that is not yet at hand. Consciousness confronts an actuality that does not yet contain the virtuous activity that consciousness is about to undertake. Instead, consciousness finds itself in the role of a "knight of virtue" confronting a world that is not governed by virtue. Such a world is rather governed by the "way of the world" in which individuals pursue their self-interest as if it were the law. Everyone advances the purposes of their given individuality as if they were what come first. That is precisely what the knight of virtue is contending with and there would be nothing for the knight of virtue to do if it did not have that way of the world opposing it. Otherwise its whole life of virtue would collapse, for its defining mission depends upon the world not yet being in accord with virtue. This situation contrasts starkly with that of ethical community, whose members' pursuit of the good only takes place within an institutional setting that already embodies the achievement of that good and contains the ongoing activity of its realization.

On Hegel's account, the way of the world contains not just individuals pursuing the law of their heart, but also the first form of self-actualizing reason, where the individual takes pleasure in someone else. As Hegel notes in paragraph 382, the content of the way of the world is nothing but both preceding movements of self-consciousness, from which the shape of virtue has emerged and which it now opposes. Why would that be? Basically, consciousness must have before it its opponent if it is going to be a knight of virtue. The enemy can just as well be those who live the life of the seducer, the life that Kierkegaard depicts in *Either/Or* in his essay on *Don Giovanni*,<sup>8</sup> as those who pursue the law of their heart. It matters not whether one affirms one's individuality just as individual or as being the law. Either way, one opposes virtue's sacrifice of individuality to the universality of law.

Hegel describes the struggle of virtue as a matter of having faith in the true essence of what is actual. We earlier encountered faith in the shape of the unhappy consciousness, which depended upon pious feeling because it could not conceptualize the reconciliation with the essential consciousness that it sought. Faith is here invoked in regard to the essentiality of what virtue is pursuing, namely the law of virtue. For the knight of virtue, the way of the world is not genuine actuality, but something inessential. Why need the



essentiality of virtue be a matter of faith rather than something eminently conceivable? Is it because the way of the world is too contingent upon individual caprice to have any conceptual determination? Or is it, conversely, that the triumph of virtue over the way of the world is fraught with the same contingency?

The knight of virtue is not supposed to be a Don Quixote, setting out on a quest of folly, but a hero engaging in something that is eminently realizable. It is, after all, a pursuit of obligation, which, as such, can achieve success. Given its own certainties, the knight of virtue has reason to have faith that the way of the world can be overcome. Nonetheless, consciousness will discover that in attempting to sacrifice its own individuality in the pursuit of virtue and to make that virtue govern the world, it is embarking on a quest that cannot possibly succeed.

The forces with which the knight of virtue must contend are those individuals animating the way of the world. They are the individuals searching for pleasure in seduction and the individuals who attempt to make the law of the heart the law of the world. What are their respective weapons and what weapons does the knight of virtue have to counter them? Hegel describes the weapons on both sides as being nothing but the essence of the combatants themselves. Paragraph 385 spells out these weapons' character, identifying them simply as the endowments, the abilities, the powers, the capacities, the faculties of the individuals involved. This description is presented as a universal way of characterizing the agents in question. They have their essence in these personal attributes because what all the participants in the struggle bring to their combat is nothing but their respective individualities. Whether they regard themselves as lawful or not, their respective individualities are replete with all sorts of contingent impulses and desires. There is nothing about the filling of these that has any kind of necessity to it, nothing that could be said to be essential to the content of their individuality. Each possesses a given individuality, but what that contains is capricious and changeable. One cannot know in truth what it will be.

Nonetheless, these personal endowments and abilities are essential to the undertakings of all sides of the combat for they are present in any individual endeavor and here consciousness is engaging in an individual quest against the similarly individual quests of others. Furthermore, not only do these individual capacities have to be employed, but they must be animated by impulses, desires, and particular aims because nothing will be done unless they are set to use in pursuit of some end, which here is determined by the individuals themselves.

Given this character of the "weapons" that individuals bring to the conflict between the knight of virtue and the way of the world, the triumph of virtue becomes fraught with dilemma. There can be no reason for virtue to prevail precisely because the opponents have exactly the same weapons.

Moreover, the knight of virtue confronts an entire world that is governed by those who employ those weapons for other purposes.

On the other hand, the knight of virtue does have faith in ultimate success, given consciousness's underlying certitude that what is genuinely true conforms to its own self-consciousness and that the world it opposes is just a show, which can be negated and made to conform to virtue. This faith is required in order to engage in the struggle for virtue, which otherwise would appear hopeless. If, however, consciousness takes its faith seriously, the knight of virtue must treat the opposing way of the world as in itself null. In effect, the knight of virtue is expecting reality itself to make its own end run around the enemies of virtue and somehow overcome them by itself without having to rely upon the knight of virtue's own intervention. Of course, if that is the case, then the whole pursuit of virtue is, as Hegel puts it, just a bluff.<sup>9</sup> It is just a bluff because it is not really what is going to win the war. After all, there is nothing about it that would allow it to prevail over its opponents unless they themselves have no real opposition to offer.

On the other hand, if virtue really can prevail because what confronts it is really just an epiphenomenal, unessential show lacking any real subsistence of its own, then the knight of virtue does not need to do anything. The whole starting point, however, of the knight's quest is that it indeed stands opposed to a given world that is not in conformity with its pursuit of virtue.

Furthermore, the pursuit of virtue requires that consciousness cancel its own individuality. After all, if the way of the world is not going to undermine itself on its own, then success depends upon the virtuous activity of the knight of virtue. Can, however, the knight of virtue do what is necessary if that depends upon sacrificing its individuality? Can it actually combat the way of the world without putting its individual capacities to use under some sway of its own impulses and desires?

The experience of virtue and the way of the world ends up showing that both sides of the conflict do not really understand what they are doing. They see themselves as being engaged in a battle over what is valid, with one side trying to sacrifice individuality and the other trying to uphold individuality. In so doing, they are operating under a common assumption that they take in a different direction.

This assumption involves not just a common preoccupation with individuality, the one directed negatively and the other positively. It rather comprises a shared view that individuality and the universality of virtue are opposed to one another. The participants in the way of the world advance an individuality that is ultimately irreconcilable with universality, even if those who follow the law of the heart attempt to treat their individuality as a law. As a result of their experience, they will maintain that everyone really acts out of self-interest, rather than following a virtue whose universality requires the sacrifice of individuality. They will regard any pursuit of a law that is

opposed to individuality as a quixotic quest, because everyone really acts out of self-interest. Opposing them, of course, is the knight of virtue who wants to eliminate all individuality, all self-interest because it is not reconcilable with the universality of virtue.

What the knight of virtue writes off is the very aspect of individuality that is here of crucial concern. That aspect is the connection of individuality to actuality, containing the lesson that if individuals are to achieve anything, they must have a particular end and motivation that drives them to take a specific action. Otherwise, they do not accomplish anything. Consciousness here presumes that any such particular purpose and motivation must be counter to what is universal, but the experience of the knight of faith in face of the way of the world indicates that this is an untenable and self-defeating presumption.

The experience of the law of the heart may have shown that the given individuality of consciousness cannot be advanced as something immediately universal, but that does not mean that there cannot be any particular ends that retain universality. They will not be universal just because they are the individual's own, as the law of the heart untenably assumed. Nonetheless, the individual can make universal ends its own and unless it does so, they will not be actualized.

The problem of the knight of virtue revolves around this emergent truth. The knight of virtue wants to write off that side of activity wherein the self has an interest of its own, but doing so ensures that nothing gets done. On the other hand, there is no reason to subscribe to the assumption of the way of the world, that everyone acts out of self-interest in opposition to the universal. Both sides find themselves caught in upholding a divide that actuality cannot help but overcome.

What then is the real outcome of their conflict? Does the vice of self-interest prevail over virtue? Or do both sides collapse? In paragraph 390, Hegel sheds light on the denouement by comparing the situation of virtue and the way of the world with that of ancient virtue. Ancient virtue is something that Hegel will later associate with ethical community as it comes on the scene as a shape of consciousness as "spirit." There ethical community has an immediate form privileging determinations given by nature that will prove to be not fully rational. Nonetheless, ancient virtue, understood as tied to ethical community, does not stand over and against an actuality that it has to transform. Ancient virtue rather is immersed in an ethical community whose members are already pursuing virtue by fulfilling the roles that comprise the way of that ethical world. Here, that is not the case. In all the shapes of the self-actualization of self-consciousness, reason is to be actualized by the individual overcoming the given. That given is presumed to be something not yet embodying the rationality that will only be realized as the product of the transformative activity of consciousness. The conflict of virtue with the

way of the world brings to a head the dilemma of this predicament, whose resolution will eventually engender a shape of consciousness akin to the standpoint of ancient virtue.

In paragraphs 391 and 392, Hegel depicts how both sides of the current conflict end up eliminating themselves through their opposition. In the pursuit of virtue against the way of the world, both protagonists experience that their own engagements are not really what they take them to be. All the different contradictions that arise in the quests of the knight of virtue and the worldly resignation to self-interest lead to a recognition that virtue cannot be represented as something that in itself has no actuality any more than individuality can be upheld to be in opposition to virtue. The knight of virtue experiences how virtue cannot be realized in the way of the world if it is antithetical to individuality. On the other hand, consciousness equally experiences in its struggles that the way of the world cannot be so evil as it presumes precisely because the activity of individuality is the actuality of the universal. On both accounts, consciousness can no longer take seriously the task of bringing forth virtue in the way of the world through the sacrifice of individuality. That undertaking falls aside insofar as consciousness experiences that the world is not so evil because the actualization of what is valid lies in individuality itself. The reality of the universal is thus to be sought in the actuality of individuality. The two opposing sides of virtue and the way of the world turn out to be mere points of view that prove themselves lacking in a true understanding of what is transpiring.

Consciousness has discovered that in truth the reality of the universal lies in the movement of individuality. This does not amount to a return to the law of the heart. The law of the heart presents individuality with its given content, what the heart finds in itself, what is immediately there, as being the universal, the law that governs essential reality, and calls for transforming the world it opposes. Here, by contrast, the universal is identified with the *movement* of individuality rather than with its present subjective content. Of course, what this movement comprises must be clarified.

To set the stage for what happens next, paragraph 393 looks back briefly on the opposition that defined all three shapes of the actualization of self-consciousness and observes what is involved in its removal. Hegel here notes that the active impulse of individuality has now become an end in itself. This was never the case in the three preceding shapes because the actualization of self-consciousness was always directed upon something other than itself. The activity of the individual served as a means for realizing something else, something that was a product of its engagement. If the movement of individuality figured as an end in itself, it would be regarded as what is of universal validity or what is genuine actuality. It would not be engaged in to lead to something beyond itself. In all three cases of the actualization of self-con-

sciousness, individual activity was directed at transforming something else to produce something that was supposed to be the rationale for its engagement.

When Hegel here speaks of how the outcome of virtue and the way of the world has shown that the movement of individuality is itself the universal, this is tantamount to saying that it is the end in itself. Because individuality's actuality has universal validity, it is for its own sake. As Hegel goes on to note, the use of powers and the play of their expression is what gives life to what would be dead in itself, because the "in-itself," without the use of powers and their play, is not actual.<sup>10</sup> It is only actualized through the mobilization of these powers, which is why the genuine "in itself" is not an unexecuted abstract universal without existence. It is instead the actuality of the process of individuality.

It is now apparent where our observation is leading. We are about to encounter a shape of reason where consciousness takes the process of its own individuality to be true actuality. Is this going to involve a reversion to some kind of observation of the active self? It cannot, for the process of individuality is itself an activity in the world relating to others, rather than a retreat to the detached spectatorship of observation.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 348, p. 211.
2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 1, chap. 5, 1096a13–17, p. 4.
3. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1959), 1:43–134.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 363, p. 219.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 367, p. 221.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 379, p. 227.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 380, p. 228.
8. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1:43–134.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 386, p. 231.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 393, p. 235.



## *Lecture 10*

# **Reason as Individuality Real in and for Itself**

### PART 1

Our observation has reached the third form of consciousness as reason, encompassing the final set of shapes that precede what henceforth will unfold under the rubric of “spirit.” Let us briefly contrast where we have arrived with what went before. Remember that consciousness as reason always operates with the certainty that what it confronts exhibits the category. This signifies that the given object that consciousness opposes will present the identity of self-consciousness and consciousness, which is to say that the independent otherness to which consciousness relates will be at one with consciousness’s relating to itself.

Such certainty is a formula for reason insofar as reason is an objective thinking, recognizing what independently confronts it to be not something foreign to it, but something in which it can be at home, in which the determinations of its own thinking will be encountered without doing violence to what is apprehended, where the true determination of what confronts it is at one with knowing’s own character.

Observation operated with this certainty and sought to find the category given in what it confronts. In other words, observation looked for the category’s identity of consciousness and self-consciousness in the form of being. In engaging in various types of observation, consciousness as reason experienced that the form of being was simply not compatible with the category’s unification of consciousness and self-consciousness. Whether observation sought the category in the given being of objects separate from the self or in the given being of the self, the immediacy of being could not exhibit the objective self-differentiation of reason.

The experience of this failure led to another way of seeking the category in objectivity, of validating the rationality of what is. This consists in consciousness taking a negative relation to what is given and transforming it so as to make objectivity at one with self-consciousness. Here consciousness engages in making objectivity rational, proving the category to be present in virtue of the activity of self-consciousness, thereby enabling consciousness to be aware of its identity with what it confronts.

Through the experience of the various ways in which consciousness acts with the certainty that its transformation of the given would establish the rationality of objectivity, the deficiency of this whole enterprise became manifest. The stumbling block proved to be the opposition of self-consciousness to the given on which it acted. That opposition was basic to these shapes, for consciousness set out to actualize reason by transforming the given only insofar as there was something opposing it that had to be overcome. This whole enterprise had something futile about it because it presupposed an opposition that made the achievement of what it was aiming at something distinct from the activity of its engagement. As a result, there was an inherent disparity between consciousness's own process and the product that was supposed to be that in which consciousness was to find itself at home. Consciousness could never validate its certainty of the unity of its consciousness and self-consciousness for what it aimed at realizing in objectivity always lay beyond its own activity.

This dilemma exhausted itself in the attempt of virtuous consciousness to overcome its own individuality in face of a world of individuals who were not virtuous. Here consciousness experienced how the very opposition of the knight of virtue and the way of the world could not hold itself up, for the ensuing conflict left consciousness aware that the reality of rationality could only lie in its own active engagement, rather than in the product of a transformed world or in something observed to be given.

Consciousness is now led to take the very being of its activity to be true reality. How can this be validated? How can consciousness go about verifying its certainty that the being of reason lies in the activity of consciousness rather than in any independent being or any separate product of its work? The resolution of this question is what we now stand ready to observe in the shapes of consciousness that Hegel presents under the heading of the "individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself." These shapes have overcome the untenable opposition of individuality to what is universally valid, having recognized that what is universally valid cannot be actual without containing the activity of its realization, without containing active individuality.

The efforts of this kind of individuality take the form of three successive shapes of consciousness. Hegel identifies the first under the peculiar name of a "spiritual animal kingdom and deceit, or the 'matter in hand' itself" (*das*



*geistige Tierreich and der Betrug oder die Sache selbst*”). This shape is followed by two others involving law, “Reason as Lawgiver” (“*die gesetzgebende Vernunft*”) and “Reason as testing laws” (“*die gesetzprüfende Vernunft*”). The experience of all of these shapes will finally lead to something that was anticipated at the beginning of the last section—the shapes of consciousness as spirit.

We will encounter talk of spirit at the end of the first of these three shapes in conjunction with mention of what Hegel calls “*die Sache selbst*”—a term that is hard to get a handle on and equally difficult to convey in a single term or phrase, such as “the thing that matters” or the “matter in hand,” to cite the translations offered by Terry Pinkard and A. V. Miller, respectively. The significance of both spirit and “*die Sache selbst*” will become intelligible only by working through the three shapes of consciousness of the section before us.

Our first task is to observe how the individuality that is real in and for itself is characterized. To this end, it is important to note those matters that are no longer in play. As Hegel points out in paragraph 394, we are no longer dealing with an individuality that acts in opposition to immediately existent actuality, locating the truth in its own thought or rhetoric about a good that is not to be found in the world. Rather, we now have before us a shape of consciousness that will regard its own actual activity to be what is genuinely truthful. What exactly is this going to mean and how will such a shape of consciousness seek to validate its certainty?

Insofar as the activity engaged in by consciousness here counts as its own truth and actuality, Hegel further notes in this same paragraph, 394, the very purpose of consciousness is the exhibition of itself in its activity. What is at stake for consciousness is not so much a matter of transforming a given world external to it as becoming through its activity what it is and making what it is something actual.

For this reason, Hegel sees fit in paragraph 395 to characterize this shape as self-consciousness that has the pure category itself for its object, or, the category that has become conscious of itself. If self-consciousness has the pure category itself for its object, then consciousness is going to regard itself as its object at the same time that it has the category as its object. This is because it would not be self-conscious and have the category as its object unless it regards itself as the category. The category has become conscious of itself for the same reason. After all, if self-consciousness has the category as its object, as self-conscious it knows *itself* to be the category. Hence, when self-consciousness knows the category, the category knows itself.

What does this mean? How can self-consciousness be conscious of the category, which is to say be conscious of itself as the category, as this unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, of what is in-itself and for-itself? And how would this consciousness regard itself as being active?

The category is expressive of the underlying certainty of rationality, that awareness or thinking is at one with what it confronts. Here self-consciousness regards itself as being already a true actuality that confronts its truth in its own activity. This activity is not directed toward transforming what is other than consciousness so as to give consciousness its valid being. Rather, consciousness is going to become through its activity what it truly is. Consciousness is going to be realizing itself and nothing but itself. Its activity is thus going to be self-realizing in form.

Accordingly, as paragraph 396 observes, consciousness is now engaged in an activity that is no longer really caught in any oppositions or conditioned by anything external. Instead, consciousness operates so as to be something that begins from itself and is directed toward itself, realizing what it already is. In this way, it treats its own individuality as the one and only genuine actuality.

The material of its activity is therefore itself. Insofar as it works with itself, it relates to itself as having a natural character, that is, a given character of its own that provides the object of its exertions.

Further, the purpose of the activity does not lie in realizing something other than itself or giving something other than itself a new character. The activity of consciousness is directed solely toward itself, bringing itself to light, exhibiting what it already is. For this reason, Hegel notes that the activity seems to revolve in a circle, for what it aims at is something that the agent antecedently comprises.<sup>1</sup> This circularity suggests that there might be something problematic about the whole enterprise. If consciousness regards itself as having a given, original nature from which its activity starts and yet regards its activity to be self-realizing, it appears that there is a difference between that activity and its point of departure. How is its activity ingredient in its being if it has a nature given prior to that activity?

The only way to avoid a discrepancy is if somehow the activity exhibits nothing but the natural character of the agent. The purpose of consciousness's activity must be exclusively its self-realization or becoming what it already is. Nonetheless, the activity is still distinct from the given starting point in that it has to proceed from it and leave it behind. That activity operates with the material that is given, namely its own original nature, using that as its means to produce something. After all, the activity is going to give rise to a work.

That work, however, is presumably not going to be anything alien. It is going to be merely a self-realization of the individual, a pure translation of the potentiality of the individual into its actualization. Consciousness can then regard itself as being determinative of everything it achieves and regard this as being what is valid and true. In this way, consciousness can be at home with itself in what is actual, for its activity is the actualization of its own nature.

Reason, as objective thought, is at one with itself in everything, laying claim to all being to the extent that being is transparent to reason. Here we have a practical self-actualization that has this same underlying agenda. Consciousness as reason pursues in different ways the verification of its genuine objectivity—first in the passive manner of observation, then by acting upon the given, and now by realizing itself. The question to be answered is how can consciousness realize itself and, in realizing itself, know itself to be at one with the totality of what is objective? After all, the original nature that consciousness has and from which its self-realizing activity starts is merely individual. It hardly seems to qualify as a surrogate for all that is genuinely objective. The activity is individual, the self-realization is individual, and, as we are going to see, this limitation is going to have crucial ramifications for whatever universal aspirations this self-realization is going to have.

Hegel begins by focusing on this individuality. In paragraph 397, under the rubric of the “spiritual realm of animals and deception or the thing that matters,” he observes consciousness embarking on a self-realization of an individuality that is real and determinate. Consciousness no longer regards itself as being opposed to what is universal, but rather is certain that it is universal and that its process of realization is going to have universal ramifications. This process is going to be determinative of everything that can be said to be true. It begins and ends with itself and is going to be operating as if it could be oblivious to everything else. As Hegel observes in paragraph 398, we here have an individuality that comes on the scene as an original determinate nature and is engaged in relating solely to itself. Insofar as all relation of the conscious individual to anything other than itself has been removed, the original character that the individual has by nature is the simple principle that is going to pervade everything in its self-actualization. Nothing new or alien to it is going to occur in its self-actualization. The individual is going to remain at one with itself. It is going to remain self-equal. Also, it is going to remain free.

Why speak of freedom here? What is essentially free about this whole endeavor? The activity of consciousness starts from itself and ends with itself and is not determined by anything else. Neither realizing things outside of itself nor being the effect of other causes, the activity of consciousness is genuinely self-realization and as such it exhibits freedom.

Nonetheless, as Hegel notes in paragraph 400, there are distinctions, even though consciousness is here only engaged in self-actualization, remaining always at one with itself, remaining the genus underlying all of its differentiations. There are differentiations because consciousness has an original nature and engages in activity, which has a purpose, means of which it makes use, and a resulting work. All of these factors are distinguishable moments of this entire process. The process is unified, but to be what it is it must have these distinct elements.

The key point is that the contents of these various moments of the process are really all the same. The purpose is not really distinct in content from the original nature, just as the means of the activity and its product are going to exhibit the same thing, despite the fact that they are distinguished. Without the distinctions you do not have any activity, but without maintaining the identity of content in every moment of the process it cannot be the becoming of what the individual already is.

What then is the original nature of the individual that pervades the process and gives it its unity? How can it be identified and articulated? In paragraph 401, Hegel addresses this original nature, the nature of the individual who is not yet acting. The individuality in question is such that it is self-realizing. It must have a character that allows it to become what it already is and, in doing that, establish an actuality in which it is at one with itself, thereby bringing before itself the being of the category, that is, the achievement of rationality. Hegel characterizes the nature in question by invoking faculties, abilities, talents, and so on. The same things came up, as they must in any discussion of individual action, when we were observing consciousness as reason that was going to actualize itself in the world it confronts. There, however, the capacities and talents were indifferent to the purpose to be achieved, since they did not have any intrinsic connection to that purpose as opposed to any other. This was reflected in how both sides in the contest of virtue versus the way of the world had at their disposal the same weapons, the same abilities, talents, and so forth. Such capacities were like those Kant dismisses in his discussion of the good will for having no intrinsic worth, insofar as they can be employed for realizing ends of any character.<sup>2</sup>

Here, however, the original nature of the individual cannot be indifferent to what the activity realizes. This is because the endowments comprising this nature are only of use to themselves. They are only for the sake of expressing themselves or exhibiting themselves. For that reason Hegel will later observe that if one is dealing with a plurality of individuals engaged in this type of self-actualization, there is no way of ranking them with respect to their validity. Since they are each equally self-realizing, there is no external standard by which they can be judged. At most, one might make quantitative distinctions, insofar as one individual might be faster, stronger, or more powerful, but there would be no way of otherwise evaluating them since they are not in relation to any separate common standard.<sup>3</sup> Each is just in relation to itself, for it is solely for the sake of realizing or exhibiting or displaying itself.

This means that the activity to which such a natural character is going to be put to work will have a formal character. Since the activity does not produce something other than the display or actualization or the putting to work of these natural capacities, it is just going to be, as Hegel puts it, the

pure translation of the form of not yet being exhibited into the form of being exhibited.<sup>4</sup>

With this the case, how self-consciousness is going to know its own original nature becomes a vexing problem. Since the original nature is self-realizing, it would seem that consciousness can only encounter what it is when it gets exhibited in its activity. Yet how is self-consciousness to know that it has realized itself in its activity? Could it fail to do so? And is there any way for consciousness to know whether or not it has succeeded in becoming what it already is?

Consciousness is here operating with the certainty that actuality is nothing but the realization of what it already has as its natural, given potential. The problem is that the nature to be actualized has no character of its own that can be pointed to separately from its actualization in activity. Can consciousness then verify its operative certainty that it is the self-realization of reason, the category that is conscious of itself? Can consciousness prove to itself that it has the character it is certain of having?

Consider the slogan, "become what you are." Is there any meaningful way in which this slogan can be recognized to be at work? As Hegel observes, the original content is for consciousness only insofar as consciousness has actualized it.<sup>5</sup> The individual cannot know himself prior to having brought himself to actuality by way of action. In this respect, the activity is the very coming-to-be of the individual's own self-consciousness.

Of course, such coming-to-be operates on the presumption that what the individual is doing is nothing more than engaging in a kind of self-actualization. There is a peculiar circularity that cannot be escaped, for the individual can only become acquainted with its original essence from the deed that is performed, yet to act as the individual is purported to act, the individual already has to have a purpose for the deed, and the purpose is to be nothing other than realizing what the individual already is. The individual has to begin immediately from himself. Is this going to be possible if the original nature is not manifest apart from the activity that depends upon it?

Presumably the process of self-actualization proceeds from the original natural potentiality of the individual, guided by the purpose that sets it into its activity, employing the means it requires, and ending up with a work. As Hegel observes, the unity of these various elements of the process seems to fall "within consciousness."<sup>6</sup> That is, it appears that it is only for consciousness itself that these factors have the same content and are nothing other than the moments of the self-actualization of individual consciousness. It remains to be seen whether in their actualization they really are so united.

The most obvious challenge concerns the nature of the work that the activity of self-actualization produces. To be determinate and actual, it must have a particular being and as such the work is an individual entity that can be contrasted with other works produced by the same individual as well as

other agents. Thus there is a plurality of works in the world confronting each consciousness.

Moreover, the self does not cease to be a self-realizing individual with the single work. To continue to be self-realizing, the self must engender a plurality of works. Where then is the original identity of the self to be found? Is the self manifest in one work to the exclusion of the others? Or is there now a plurality of different selves, because the works are different? The activities themselves have an individual particular being distinguishing them from one another. They occur at different times and places and are productions of different works. How then is the self to actualize any identifiable unity for itself in this manifold of activities and works?

The works have to be regarded by the self that produces them as all actualizations of itself, of the same self. Yet the original nature of the self is to be exhibited in the works, because only they put on display the character of the individual. The works produced by the same individual may all be works in general, but what they should be exhibiting is the determinate self of that individual, whose given nature must come through its activities and works, whose multiplicity poses a problem. Where is the unity of the self to be found? Where in its multiple works can the conscious individual find its own specific individuality and be sure that the various beings of its works are just its self-actualization?

Complicating matters is the presence of a plurality of self-realizing individuals. They produce their own works in the world to which they all belong. Even if every individual could somehow find its unitary self realized in its own works, each confronts works of others that do not exhibit its own self-actualization.

This poses a problem similar to what consciousness already confronted in its attempt to realize the law of its heart, as well as in the conflict of virtue and the way of the world. In those cases, consciousness experienced how the individuality of its self-actualization made it impossible for the world it confronted to be at one with just itself. As individual, consciousness confronted a world of others, pursuing their own laws of the heart and their own self-interests, challenging the universality of its self-actualization. In the present case, consciousness finds itself amid a plurality of self-realizing individuals producing multiple works in the world. They all may be acting as if they were completely oblivious and independent and not doing anything that is related to others, but they cannot avoid experiencing that they belong to a common world that contains not just their own works. Consequently, consciousness confronts other self-realizing individuals whose activities and works comprise an objectivity that is alien to its own self-actualization. On all sides, the individual engagements of self-actualization challenge the whole possibility of what is taking the form of self-actualization and being understood to have that form.

How then are the self-actualizing individuals to deal with this predicament and still validate their certainty that all reality is their own self-actualization? If the self-actualizing individuals are to be able to be conscious of actuality as their self-actualization, they can no longer attach themselves to the particular natural character that is supposed to be exhibited in their particular works. As particular, these works not only lack any certifiable connection with one unified self, but they stand amid works of others that cannot reflect the self-actualization of the individual. The only way that the self-actualizing consciousness can know actuality as its self-actualization is if it somehow regards its activity, works, and world as something in which it is at home irrespective of the particular determinations of the actualities in question.

This option is the only available remedy to the stumbling block that each and every self-actualizing consciousness experiences. All find that their attempts to lay hold of any particular content for their exhibited natures and the works that manifest them cannot succeed in rendering actual their self-actualization. Instead, the only way that the self can maintain the certainty that what it confronts is its own self-actualization is if its self-actualization takes the form of what Hegel calls a "pure activity," an activity that is indifferent to all the contingencies that clothe it.<sup>7</sup> Contingencies are built into the activity of self-actualization due to its formality. It is always an open question what will be the means employed or the content of the work itself and the original nature it exhibits. There is nothing about the structure of self-actualization that gives it any specific filling. It has an almost tautological formula, where the self that displays itself is whatever gets manifested in activity. It is thus contingent what are the capacities that are exhibited, what are the means employed by the activity, and what the work turns out to be. Moreover, it is equally contingent whether the self-actualization process gets frustrated by circumstances, at least if it remains tied to some particular content.

This indicates that the self-actualizing consciousness can maintain its certainty if it regards what occurs as being its self-actualization no matter what content it possesses. Then, individual consciousness can regard actuality as its own insofar as its self-actualization process is indifferent to any particular filling and operates as a purified, purely universal realization.

This play arises from the difficulties individuals have experienced in producing multiple works in face of others doing the same and discovering that self-actualization can never depend upon any of these particulars. In response, individuals now recognize that the process of self-actualization is indifferent to these particular contingencies and that it has a universal character that is not conditioned by them. Accordingly, self-actualization operates through whatever factor the self recognizes to be its realized nature.

That which the individual self now recognizes to be its self-actualization is what Hegel calls in German "*die Sache selbst*," or what our translator

(Miller) calls “the matter in hand.” Hegel uses the term “*die Sache selbst*” with rigorous consistency, unlike his translators, who do not always stick resolutely with some corresponding expression.

Significantly, Hegel uses this same term in his *Philosophy of Right* in the discussion of property. There he refers to the object of property as *die Sache*, as the factor in which the owner embodies its will in a recognizable fashion.<sup>8</sup> What is noteworthy about property is that when one determines oneself as an owner by making some factor or *Sache* one’s own, doing so is completely indifferent to what that factor is, other than that it be susceptible of ownership. The particular nature of the object and its relation to one’s needs has nothing to do with its determination as property. All that counts is that one lay one’s will in that factor in a manner recognizable to other agents who have determined themselves as owners.

Property does not rest upon need or desire. One may have no need or desire for something and yet one might still own it. Ownership has simply to do with the factor being recognized to be the embodiment of one’s will. One determines oneself as an owner insofar as one lays one’s will in some object that is then recognized by oneself and others as being one’s own. That recognition rests upon nothing having to do with the nature of the item itself. It simply acknowledges that one has put one’s will into it, without conflicting with others doing the same.

Further, one’s determination of oneself as an owner, has nothing to do with any particular feature about oneself other than that one has embodied one’s will in some factor. Only the facts the one’s will is in that factor and that others recognize this make that object one’s property.

Something very similar goes on here in the *Phenomenology* where talk of “*die Sache*” also occurs. Namely, individuals now actualize themselves in an activity and a work in complete indifference to their particular character. It instead figures simply as “*die Sache selbst*,” as the abstract realization of the individual’s equally abstract character as self-actualizing. The unity and universality of the self can only be actualized if no emphasis is put upon the particular character of its activity, work, and original nature.

We now need to observe how this new form of self-actualization arises and works itself out. Hegel, in paragraph 404, notes that consciousness must examine whether its experience of self-actualization conforms to the concept of which it is certain, that the actuality it confronts is its self-actualization. The work arising from the activity of self-actualization has a determinate being and therefore exists in relationship to other things, other works, and other individuals for whom it is an alien actuality. This predicament places before all self-actualizing individuals the challenge of somehow overcoming the alien character of the other works and asserting their own work as their self-actualization.



Each work is subject to being effaced by the counter play of other powers and interests, leaving the self-actualization to be achieved by the work contingent and transitory. This opens an opposition between, as Hegel puts it, being and doing. One has done one's activity, yet that activity has a product which, instead of exhibiting oneself, is prey to all sorts of other things besides one's self-actualization. The work therefore shows itself to be unequal to the original nature it should be making manifest.

The same discrepancy applies to the other elements of the process of self-actualization. Insofar as the activity proceeds in a determined fashion in the world, it too is subject to external contingencies, as Hegel notes in paragraph 406. All the difficulties that arose in observing action and locating a continuity between purpose, action, and the consequences that followed in the world replay themselves here, casting into doubt the achievement of self-actualization.

The experience of these difficulties confronts consciousness with the truth that self-actualization is not to be found in the contingent particular contents of the elements of self-actualization. That truth rather lies in a true work, the thing that genuinely matters, a pure product of a pure activity in which the individual chooses in what to find its actuality with utter indifference to its given content. It alone is what persists within the contingency of the individual's activity and circumstances. This alone is the kind of work that can provide the self with a display of its self-actualization. As Hegel observes in paragraph 409, such a work can arise only from an activity that has become analogously purified. To realize itself in such an object, the activity must be equally indifferent to the contingencies affecting its working. Like the purified object it produces, the activity becomes purified. Insofar as it produces a work that is a determinable but otherwise indeterminate matter, the activity must be a determining but otherwise indeterminate engagement.

## PART 2

Consciousness has left behind the form of self-actualization that ties itself to the natural character of the individual as exhibited in particular activities and works. Instead, consciousness now seeks to actualize itself in a pure activity free of any connection to the given nature of the individual, exhibiting itself in a matter at hand that is purified of all the contingencies afflicting works in their particularity.

How is this to be achieved? Is it simply a matter of the individual consciousness accepting whatever happens in its activities to be its self-actualization? Is this indifference, this "going with the flow," how the individual purifies its activity and produces works that are equally purified of any

particular commitment? And if so, can this mode of purification validate the certainty that what is is the self-actualization of consciousness?

The purpose of consciousness remains nothing other than self-exhibition, becoming what one is, or engaging in self-actualization. Since the particular content of activity and works is contingent, the possibility of certifying that self-actualization is achieved was problematic so long as that content was the focus of attention. If now one instead recognizes that the truth of self-actualization is indifferent to the contents involved, then the work in question, the matter at hand, *die Sache selbst* is whatever is present in one's self-actualization. If, however, one's self-actualization is achieved only in indifference to any particular actual character that might be ascribed to it, it is as indeterminate as the abstract work and the purified activity in which it is putatively exhibited.

This indeterminacy can be accepted and that acceptance is observed in paragraph 411 in connection with the so-called honest consciousness. This honest consciousness embraces what Hegel describes as the idealism expressed by the purified work, the idealism that regards the self to remain at one with itself in pervading all the contingencies that afflict activity and work. In this pure self-realization, the so-called honest consciousness regards whatever it is doing to give it the satisfaction of realizing itself. As Hegel observes in paragraphs 412 and 413, this is the case even when the honest consciousness does not bring to fruition what it aims at. Even then it regards its failure as its self-actualization.

Can the honest consciousness really validate its certainty that whatever is is its self-actualization? Here, as Hegel notes, the thing that matters is just the unity of the decision of consciousness to recognize itself in a work, independently of the contents of any of the factors involved. Can that be a satisfactory solution? Is that going to be a way of conducting oneself so that one is in a position to verify that the actuality one confronts is one's own actuality? Or is this in truth a path of deception, involving both self-deception and the deception of others?

Hegel observes how the latter turns out to be what consciousness here experiences. First of all, the "honest consciousness" deceives others by reporting that the things they do are its self-actualization rather than exclusively their own. Secondly, the "honest consciousness" deceives itself by treating factors that have no determinate connection to itself as its own self-actualization. These dual deceptions are committed in an all-sided way, for the "honest consciousness" regards no activity and work to be alien to its self. Admittedly, the "honest consciousness" does not commit these deceptions in bad faith. It appropriates everything as its self-actualization in sincere fulfillment of its certainty that it must be at home in what is genuinely actual.

Nonetheless, the experience of doing so unavoidably undercuts the truth of its certainty. The problem is that the honest consciousness must confront

the fact that its pure self-actualization deprives it of any way of distinguishing its genuine self-actualization from the contingencies of existence. Precisely because its self-actualization is indifferent to all particular content, all putative “self-actualization” is equally indifferent to any connection to the honest consciousness. This indifference makes problematic any attempt by the honest consciousness to claim some activity and work as its self-actualization as opposed to that of someone else. Even if one wants to consider one’s self-actualization to be indifferent to the particular features that its actuality possesses, one still confronts the problem that is illustrated in property ownership, where competing property claims may be advanced that have nothing to do with the physical features of the putative owners or of the objects that are under dispute. To determine whether some object belongs to one person or another, no physical examination of the object or any physiological examination of the persons can suffice. What is rather at stake is identifying a pure activity of laying one’s will in some factor in a recognizable way.

The only way of resolving the problem is spelled out in paragraph 417, which concerns the recognition of what the pure work, the thing that matters, *die Sache selbst* has shown itself to be. Hegel observes that here consciousness has experienced the deception of itself and the deception of others as essential moments of the thing that matters. As a result, consciousness recognizes that its self-actualization must reside in something whose being consists in the activity of each and every individual, instead of in some pure factor that excludes one from the other. Only in that case can the problems of deception be resolved, for only then can the individual recognize its actualization in a way that overcomes the problem of the conflict of different individuals and their respective claims.

Hegel identifies this kind of unity as spiritual essence.<sup>9</sup> Spiritual essence consists of the activity of each and all, an activity that will allow each and all to have an actuality in which they are at home. It is the outcome of the shape of the “honest consciousness” because the matter at hand has turned out to be the work of each and all. It has done so by proving to be indistinguishably the work and activity that every individual can just as well claim as its own. The pure work is, in effect, the actuality that is everyone’s work and activity. It is something in which everyone ends up achieving self-actualization. There is nothing about it that allows any lines to be drawn to separate the self-actualization of one individual from that of anyone else. It thus proves to be inherently universal, a factor in which all individuals realize themselves.

Hegel presents this outcome as providing the transition to the shape of consciousness that he identifies as law-giving reason. As he observes in paragraph 418, we now have individuals relating to something that is their activity and, in being their activity, is also the actualization of them all. We

will find that this activity consists in the giving of law such that this law-giving is exhibited in the activity of all.

Why should this common activity in which everyone's self-actualization is realized be a law-giving activity? To begin with, it is a common work in which every individual is engaged. It is something that each individual gives itself and others through its involvement. This is the activity of law-giving reason insofar as it is universal in content, emanates from all and applies to all, and in doing so comprises an actuality that each individual can recognize as its own.

This activity involves articulating law. What precisely does this comprise? Our observations have earlier encountered other involvements in law, such as the law of the heart. A comparison between the law of the heart and law-giving reason is helpful in clarifying what here lies at stake.

The law of the heart has a content that is unique to the individual whose heart is its anchor, even though that individual regards that exclusive content to be what should be universally regulative. Secondly, the law of the heart is not something operative in the world. It is not a law that already counts. Instead of being the law by which the world is actually regulating itself, the law of the heart is something that is not yet realized but ought to be realized through the activity of the individual.

The law articulated by law-giving reason is fundamentally different in both respects. First of all, the law of law-giving reason does not come from the "heart" of the individual, but from what Hegel describes as "*gesunde Vernunft*,"<sup>10</sup> which can be translated literally as "healthy reason" but perhaps more tellingly as "commonsense reason." As such, the law of law-giving reason has a content that is not unique to the individual but rather issues from an insight that is shared by all. This insight is common, but it is something immediately given. In other words, it is a common assumption that the rule that is articulated is the law. In exercising this law-giving activity, one is using healthy reason and immediately putting it forward. One is just declaring: *this is the law*. In doing so, one is not appealing to one's singular heart, but to a common sense reason that it is presumed all of us share. It is an appeal to what might be called our common moral intuitions.

Secondly, unlike the law of the heart, which resides just in the single individual, the law of law-giving reason is presumed to be a law that already counts, that already is valid and already is generally followed. The law giving activity is just expressing and articulating what it is. In giving it, one is giving a law that one presumes to be already accepted and followed by everyone. That does not mean that there are no violations, but these violations count as inessential and undistruptive of the legal order in which law-giving individuals find their common self-actualization.

These two distinguishing features of the law of law-giving reason are the outcome of the preceding shape of consciousness. The experience of the

honest consciousness and its deceptions showed that in truth, the self-actualization of consciousness produces a work that represents the lawful actuality of the activities of all. Insofar as each individual's self-actualization ended up having a universal character indifferent to the individual's own particular nature and the particularities of individual activity and its work, the work of each and all is something in which all actualize themselves in a universal fashion.

This outcome is different from the situation that observation addressed in trying to uncover what is lawful in how individuals relate to the customs and prevailing law of their world, conforming themselves to it or deviating in an individual, criminal way or in a universal, revolutionary fashion. That observation was merely attempting to describe the given laws that would apply to that relationship, whereas here law-giving reason is actively advancing something as law that is the universal work and rule of all. Law-giving reason is not proposing what the law should be, offering laws to be imposed upon a reality that does not already conform to them. It is rather affirming what one is certain of already being recognized by all others. As law-giving reason, individuals lay down a law that they consider to be already in effect and followed. Since their law-giving activity posits what is already at hand, their activity is part of the reality they recognize to prevail.

Can, however, the actual activity of law-giving reason validate the certainty that it is accomplishing what it is presumed to do? Can individuals, by immediate appeal to what they understand to be rational, affirm a content for law that is universally observed?

Hegel provides a very brief account of what consciousness experiences in attempting to validate its certainty as law-giving reason. He does so by primarily observing several examples of what might be offered as the determinate work of law-giving reason. One consists in the law that everyone ought to speak the truth and another consists in the law to "Love thy neighbor as thyself." These examples serve to illustrate the general problem entailed in the activity of law-giving reason.

The first example of what law-giving reason articulates is the law "everyone ought to speak the truth." As Hegel observes, this legal proposal needs to be qualified. Namely, one must acknowledge that everyone ought to speak the truth only if they know the truth. If they do not know the truth, this law cannot apply to them and be a universal self-actualization. Accordingly, the law would seem to require revision, so as to state, "everyone should speak the truth at all times according to one's knowledge and conviction of it." This revision, however, only appears to open a nest of problems of its own. One began by articulating a law and found that one did not really mean what one said, because one really meant not just that everyone ought to speak the truth but that everyone should speak the truth only under the qualification that they know what the truth is, at least according to their knowledge and conviction

of it. Does this qualification open the door to complete license? How do individuals know what the truth is? Does the appeal to commonsense reason guarantee any unequivocal answer?

Analogous issues are raised by Hegel's second example of a law articulated by law-giving reason: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." As Hegel observes, this proviso is directed to an individual in relationship with another individual and insofar as it is a personal relationship between individuals, it involves sentiment. The proviso, of course, really concerns not just sentiment, but an *act* of love, for it mandates how one should act with regard to others. What then does "an act of love" involve doing? One could say that one commits an act of love by trying to perform an act that will benefit others, that will not harm them but be good for them. This, however, still needs to be qualified, because one has to understand what is good for them. Hegel notes that the most important and richest form of beneficence is the universal act of the state, in comparison with which what an individual does is so trivial as to hardly be worth talking about. Insofar as the state takes care of the welfare of its citizens in an ongoing way, the proviso to "love thy neighbor as thyself" only really pertains to exceptional situations where individuals have to step in to give assistance in a special time of need. Consequently, the proviso only applies to a very contingent situation. Then, however, it ceases to be a genuinely universal law that can be the self-actualization of all. Instead, it is a particular, conditioned proviso that need not always be put into practice. One really does not have to perform any act of loving one's neighbor except in exceptional circumstances. By and large, one can leave it to the state to take care of them.

What further undermines the validity of this law of healthy reason is the question of what exactly the content of action is that it prescribes. Can what each individual understands to be beneficial to others reliably count as such?

These difficulties are symptomatic of the general problem afflicting law-governing reason. First of all, the mere act of giving law does not specify any further content that law must have. It is just as formal as the pure activity and work of the honest consciousness from whose experience it issued. Can any content count? Further, whatever may be the law that law-giving reason articulates, it stands in need of interpretation. Yet how is a universally valid interpretation to be made and who is able to provide that interpretation? Everyone who appeals to healthy reason stands on the same footing, with no one having any special claim to privileged authority. Finally, even if the content of law is established and unequivocally interpreted, one has to know how it is to be applied. Once again, however, individuals have no resources for deciding this in any definitive manner. All they have at their disposal is the presumption that they are dealing with something that is available to commonsense reason and is being followed. In effect, the law-giving of

reason identifies the law of the community simply by immediately affirming its content.

Similarly, the formal concept of ethical community leaves open what laws and roles it contains. To just immediately affirm what the law is involves something both arbitrary in respect to what content is articulated and something undetermined about what that content signifies. This immediate law-giving is tantamount to pointing out the law, which is why Hegel speaks of such law as a “this” and observes how law-giving reason shows itself unable to say what it means, alluding to the difficulties sense-certainty had in trying to immediately refer to what is. Any content can be immediately affirmed and any immediately affirmed content can be variously interpreted and regarded to being subject to different qualifications. Law-giving reason experiences these limitations, finding itself unable to validate the law it mandates. It can neither justify its content, nor even lay hold of what it signifies.

What law-giving reason discovers is that it operates in a legal community whose members live in a lawful coexistence whose immediately given content is arbitrary and opaque. The experience of this predicament reveals that the immediate content of law cannot be the source of its legitimacy. In other words, one’s rationality, one’s healthy commonsense reason cannot directly dictate the content of the law. It must do something else to enable individuals to actualize themselves in common.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant makes an argument analogous to the experience that has just unfolded. He there notes that the given content of a law cannot insure its validity, for one would always need a further law to legitimate whatever content is put forward. Consequently, he reasons, the legitimacy of conduct must be found not in the content but in the form of law.<sup>11</sup> As we shall, this new avenue of legitimation is what consciousness will pursue as the outcome of the shape of law-giving reason.

### PART 3

Consciousness may have experienced that its law-giving reason cannot validate law by appeal to its given content, but it has not thereby abandoned law as a locus for its self-actualization and the realization of reason. Consciousness remains engaged in the project of achieving a self-actualization that can take hold of the totality of what it confronts, so that it can verify its certainty that what is given to it is its self-actualization.

Consciousness’s earlier attempt to achieve this by actualizing its own given nature as having a character independent of others has proven to be untenable because of the inherent limits of its particular individuality, activity, and work. The recognition of these limits impelled consciousness to purify its self-actualization of these natural features. This involved both a

transformation of what could count as self-actualization and what is the character of the self that is actualizing itself. In order to surmount the difficulties that afflicted any retention of particular determinations that lacked both universality and necessity, individual consciousness found that it had to actualize itself as a co-determiner of a lawful condition to which it belongs. As we have seen, this first took the shape of law-giving reason, where individuals actualize themselves in lawful interaction by articulating operative laws whose given content is immediately affirmed to be valid by the reason those individuals purport to share.

The inability to validate these laws on the basis of their immediate content now confronts consciousness with the truth that these laws must instead be tested to establish their legitimacy through an examination that depends upon something other than their content. The standard for the validation of laws must be found in what is independent of their content, namely their form. Only when laws successfully pass the test of this formal adequacy, will individuals be able to regard the law-governed reality they confront to be a reality that is their self-actualization.

It is important to keep in mind that this pursuit of reason in law falls within the initial part of the development of consciousness as reason, which precedes the part that follows under the rubric of spirit. Nonetheless, the entire remainder of the *Phenomenology* still falls under the heading of reason. So here we are following one part of consciousness as reason. What is called “spirit” will be another part of reason, as will be the sections entitled “Religion” and “Absolute Knowing.”

What Hegel calls “morality” will come up as a distinct sphere in the development of the shapes of consciousness as spirit. The shape of consciousness as morality is going to involve something analogous to what we are about to observe in the shape of consciousness of reason as testing laws. It will be important to look back and see what is different about these two distinct shapes of consciousness.

Here we have the shape of reason as testing laws emerging as a departure from the attempt by individuals to realize themselves in a legal community whose laws are affirmed by them to be valid in virtue of their immediately given content. Now, consciousness will subject laws to a test that will certify their validity. This test will locate legal validity in the form of law, which will be held to count as valid by possessing a formal universality.

Hegel presents this shape of consciousness as a testing of laws by reason. Obviously, the testing in question is of a very specific character, which follows from the dilemmas of law-giving reason. Hegel begins by noting in paragraph 428 that the testing of laws that consciousness now undertakes is radically different from the examination it pursued in verifying its law-giving reason. The prior examination focused on the content of law to see whether or not it could be unequivocally determined and found to be intrinsically



rational, intrinsically tied to the self-actualization of all. Here something very different is going on, involving a very dissimilar relationship between the content of law and its universality.

The root of the difference revolves around the kind of universality that the testing of law employs. It is a formal universality that, unlike the more concrete universality of a genus, has no intrinsic particularization, no intrinsic connection to any specific differentia. Formal universality can be compatible with any content because what it concerns is the lawfulness of a particular law, that is, whether it is consistent with itself as law. That a law exhibits formal universality in no way determines anything else about its content. The test does not compare the particular content of law with any other content but rather concerns the self-identity of the law. Can the law be a law, that is, a rule that is followed by all? Can it exhibit the formal universality of being universalizable? This test does not judge a law by invoking any content that figures as the absolute standard, because law-giving reason has experienced the untenability of appealing to any immediate legal content as intrinsically valid. The standard in question instead completely abstracts from the content and simply considers its formal lawful character—namely, whether it conforms to itself as law, irrespective of what content it may have.

Precisely because this formal standard does not provide any particular content, the testing of laws that employs it must turn to laws that are already present. Instead of engaging in law-giving, in articulating specific laws, the testing of laws by reason addresses given laws that are provided to it. Nonetheless, the laws it addresses do not count in virtue of being given, but in virtue of passing through the crucible of being tested. Here consciousness takes up the content of the law without regard for whether it lies in the individual, like the law of the heart, or whether it is devoid of reality, like the quixotic pursuit of the knight of virtue. Such considerations are beside the point for consciousness is simply subjecting the laws in question to a purely formal standard.

To illustrate what happens in the testing of law by reason, Hegel presents an example that is noteworthy in several respects. First of all, it is the kind of example that Kant uses when he tries to show how the categorical imperative can be applied by examining whether a maxim of conduct is universalizable. The test of universalizability is equivalent to determining whether the maxim, the putative rule of conduct, is self-consistent. This is because the only way to decide the issue without bringing in privileged contents is to consider whether the maxim is coherent with itself as a law.

The example Hegel employs concerns whether it could be a valid law to violate the property of others if it serves one's interest. Significantly, this example not only coincides with one of Kant's favorite instances, but involves property, which, as we have seen, has a special connection with *die Sache* or the matter at hand, which was a pure work, determinable by a pure

activity devoid of any privileged natural characteristics. Hegel points out that if one takes property and regards it in isolation, there is nothing contradictory about it.<sup>12</sup> Property is what it is and the property of one owner need not conflict with that of others. By the same token, if you take in isolation the absence of property, there is nothing contradictory about that either. There can be a community of goods. It is just as self-identical as a regime of property.

If, however, one considers property or the absence of property in relation to other factors, then one encounters all sorts of contradictions. Namely, if one starts, as Hegel does, by considering the absence of property, one discovers a problem insofar as there are factors, such as water, food, and shelter, that are necessary to satisfy the needs of individuals. If these are not under any ownership, one faces a “state of nature” with no settled dominions, leaving individuals in a condition of mutual jeopardy that contradicts the continuance of an absence of property.

If instead of no ownership, there is community of ownership with property in common, there is still the problem of how goods are to be distributed in face of the different needs and desires of individuals. One could follow the principle of distributing goods “to each according to his or her need,” but that could contradict other notions of equality, such as distribution according to merit.

What this example indicates is that whereas one can always contradict a given law by bringing in some other consideration that opposes it, every law can satisfy the principle of non-contradiction. In and of itself, the absence of property can just as well be universalized as the observance of property entitlements. Everyone could go stealing from one another, reneging on their debts, and attempting to murder one another, to take familiar examples from Kant. There is nothing that precludes attempting to follow the maxims of any of these actions unless one introduces the sort of extrinsic considerations upon which Kant relies, such as concern for self-interest and survival. These concerns may be contradicted, but that they count is itself ruled out by the formal agenda of the test of universalizability.

Hegel, at the end of paragraph 431, makes a telling comment that crystallizes the difficulty confronting reason’s testing of laws. He notes that the principle of non-contradiction, which from Aristotle onward has been commonly regarded as the ultimate principle of reason, is actually a tautology. As such, it generates no content on its own and is therefore a formal criterion of self-consistency that is indifferent to truth, which, after all, does concern content. Showing something not to be contradictory can never suffice to determine whether it is true or false. What is false can always be at one with itself, whereas the true objectivity of a content depends on more than consistency. Granted, then, that the principle of non-contradiction, the completely formal criterion of formal universality, has no bearing upon truth and falsity,

how could it be thought to have any more bearing upon knowledge of the practical truth or concern with knowing what law is valid?

Since any rule can be found to be consistent with itself, it should be no surprise that Kant's applications of the categorical imperative usually import some other concern to establish universalizability. For Kant, there are two alternatives. On the one hand, one may regard the validity of laws of conduct to reside in their given content, that is, in particular the ends that they prescribe. This, for Kant, is the recipe of teleological ethics. Such an ethics of the highest good makes appeal to some privileged end, which, as highest, has no other principles grounding it and is absolute in virtue of its non-derivative immediacy. Kant is legitimately skeptical of whether any given content can have the absolute validity that it is here ascribed. This skepticism applies not just to a highest good but to first principles in general, those given principles that are supposed to be axiomatic or determinate yet self-grounding. On the other hand, as far as Kant is concerned, the only other alternative is to abstract completely from the content of anything given and just consider the form by which the content is specified, a form that is determinable completely apart from any appeal to content. Such a form is the mere lawfulness of a maxim of conduct. Kant presumes that these are the only two options. Validity is to be found in either some given or in some form or procedure of determining. We will want to see whether we will be coming face to face with a further alternative that Kant and his followers have ignored.

Indeed, we are coming face to face with something that consciousness is going to turn to as the outcome of its failure to find legitimacy in these vehicles of self-actualization that appeal to either an immediate assertion of the content of law or the formal universality of the law. Both of these have been shown to be bankrupt. The law cannot be valid simply in virtue of its given content, nor can it be valid in virtue of its formal universality. Is there then any way in which law can be valid? Or is consciousness as reason compelled to find its self-actualization in the "spiritual essence" of its lawful community without giving or testing law?

We find our observation of consciousness at a turning point, where consciousness as reason will take shape as what Hegel identifies as "spirit." As we shall see, this involves a certain form of community that will enable its members to attempt to understand their reality as being rational in terms fundamentally different from those explored until now. We will still be operating under the general rubric of reason, which is distinct from consciousness, on the one hand, and self-consciousness, on the other. Within the framework of consciousness as reason we are now leaving behind both observation and the active self-actualization of individuality with which we have been occupied. As we enter the domain of shapes of consciousness that Hegel groups under the heading of "spirit" we must explore what is the

significance of the whole talk of spirit. How and why does phenomenology turn out to be *The Phenomenology of Spirit*?

So far, we have been observing the shapes of consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason, but now we are finally encountering the shapes of spirit. We have come upon glimmers here and there of what spirit might comprise, particularly in Hegel's passing remarks on spiritual essence, but what exactly consciousness as spirit comprises must now be addressed.

Finally, we must keep in mind how the only way that phenomenology can achieve closure is if somehow the difference between knowing and its object is eliminated, if somehow there ceases to be any way of distinguishing between them. One way of thinking about that terminus is to regard it as the fulfillment of self-knowledge, for if the object can come to be known as being nothing other than the subject, self-knowledge is achieved and their distinction is overcome. Ever since consciousness as understanding experienced how its object was in truth the activity of its own knowing, we have been observing efforts at self-knowledge, first just as shapes of self-consciousness and then as shapes of self-consciousness that were certain of being in unity with consciousness. None have been able to validate their certainty. Why has it been so difficult for consciousness to succeed in knowing itself in what it confronts? What are the obstacles that remain and why will we have to go through all the different configurations that lie ahead before the discrepancy between consciousness and its object can be removed? These are questions that will haunt us as we push ahead.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 396, p. 237.
2. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 61.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 403, p. 241.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 401, p. 239.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 401, p. 240.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 401, p. 240.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 406, p. 244.
8. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, para. 42, pp. 73–74.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 418, p. 252.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 422, p. 253, para. 424, p. 254.
11. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 3rd ed., trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 42, 66.
12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 430, p. 258.

## *Lecture 11*

# **Spirit and the Ethical Order**

### PART 1

To better understand the new stage in our observation of the shapes of consciousness, let us look back on the entire preceding section in which consciousness operated as a real individuality seeking to actualize itself as true objectivity.

As this self-actualizing real individuality, consciousness was burdened by considerations already emerging from the experience of understanding and of consciousness as observing reason. Ever since consciousness took shape as understanding, it has been certain that what it takes to be true is in some respect itself. Ever since consciousness took shape as reason, it has further taken the truth of what it confronts to lie in the category, the unity of the object's independent givenness with self-consciousness. This involved a certainty of the rationality of what consciousness opposes, a certainty presuming an identity of conceivability and being, as well as of universality and individuality. With this advent of consciousness as reason, the presumption reigned that the unity of the category would be found, first in what one can observe to be lawful in nature and in the self, secondly, in what one can realize by transforming the given and making it exhibit its conformity to the self's relation to itself, and finally in the reality of the self's own activity.

The latter self-realization began by taking the shape of the conscious individual who seeks to realize its own given nature, which was yet only revealed in its own activity. This effort failed due to the particular limit of the given character of that nature, which made its realization fall besides alien actualities, undermining any identity between objectivity and self-consciousness. This problem operated at multiple levels, both with regard to the multiplicity of different works produced by the same individual as well as with

regard to the works produced by other individuals. In both cases, consciousness experienced a discrepancy between its original nature and a world that turned out to contain other factors besides that particular nature.

The experience of this failure made apparent to consciousness that what is could be known to be its self-realization only if that self-realization involved something with the universal reach of a law applying to all and recognized to be the work of all. Then, consciousness could know itself to have a universal self whose realization determined its world. Consciousness thus undertook to articulate law that was already generally operative in its world, appealing to the healthy reason it shared with others. That appeal to its own healthy reason proved to be untenable due to the particularity and arbitrariness of its immediately given contents. The universal validity of law had to be found on some other basis and this led to reason's testing of laws, which shifted focus away from the given content to the form of law. Still, since nothing in the content of a law could decide whether it had a duly universal form, any certification depended upon consciousness's own insight as the tester of the legitimacy of law. That meant that the validating of law was not itself part of the reality of law but lay in a reflection standing outside of it. Since that reflection employed a purely formal criterion, it ended up unable to certify any determinate law to be more legitimate than any other.

Through the experience of these difficulties, consciousness has come to confront a situation where the validity of law lies neither in its content or formal character, but in the activities of individuals that confer legitimacy upon it. Consciousness finds that it belongs to a community of law, whose members engage in activities that constitute the valid reality of that law and do so in such a way that its activities are inherently tied to the activities of the other members of the community. What each consciousness does in validating the laws is tied to all others doing the same, since otherwise there could not be a common legal order. For this reason, the activity of consciousness in validating laws is intrinsically connected to the realization of the entire community by all its members. The activities of others therefore do not operate as something external to the self-realization of the individual in the lawful reality of the community. Instead, they themselves are part and parcel of the realization of the individual, which is necessarily connected to the reality of the whole.

Here we have what Hegel calls "spiritual essence"—an association in which consciousness actualizes itself, but no longer as a merely particular or merely natural individual. Instead, the members of this association have a "spiritual" character in the sense that it owes its content to the individual's involvement in the community, which itself exists in individuals going about realizing themselves, fulfilling roles that have a universal, lawful dimension. Within this community individuals interact in a lawful way in animating the association that comprises the realization of and compliance to the laws. The

community exists through its members acting in recognition of laws whose realization has to already be at hand and whose reality incorporates the activities that they engage in. The members therefore do not confront the situation that earlier plagued consciousness, where consciousness was concerned with realizing something that was not yet actual, with overcoming an external reality that did not contain its own activity, and with producing something that equally excluded the activity bringing it into being. Now, in the community of “spiritual essence,” individuals find themselves at home in a world in which they can recognize their own realization as well as the starting point of their own activity.

The first mention of spirit came early on in the *Phenomenology* in the shapes of self-consciousness involving the life and death struggle and the master-servant relationship. Spirit was invoked in connection with recognition, which was not reciprocally realized in either of these shapes. Nonetheless, Hegel spoke of spirit in respect to a relationship of an I that is we and a we that is I, anticipating a genuinely reciprocal recognition. What was absent, however, was any mention of law. Instead, spirit was invoked in regard to a relationship between two individuals.

Now, where spirit becomes thematic as a shape of consciousness, it does not involve a relationship between just two individuals. It pertains to a community and, moreover, a community governed by law. Consciousness finds itself a member of a community whose members are engaged in lawful interaction. Significantly, however, the activity is not an activity of legislating or testing laws, but an activity of realizing the legal order that is already in effect. That activity of realizing law is intrinsically connected to the validation of that legal order, for there cannot be valid law in the absence of prevailing compliance.

Accordingly, the law of the community has a given character. Its presence is the presupposition of the activities of its members, rather than something that they originally enact. Since the community is ordered by its law, the community equally has a given character that is the ground upon which its members operate. On its basis, they can recognize their world to be one in which they find themselves realized as “spiritual,” intersubjectively universal selves because their reality consists in being a member of this community by participating in the lawful activity that binds them together, sustaining the community.

As such, this lawful community has a general form that leaves undetermined exactly what roles its members perform and what content its laws may have. All that is specified is that the members of the community engage in activities that sustain and reproduce the whole in a lawful manner, thereby comprising a world in which those individuals recognize their self-actualization.

Due to this formal character of the community, the particular content of law and activities is given extraneously to the nature of the “spiritual essence,” of the we that is I and the I that is we. The community will thus have a contingent filling that is independent of its form. That is, one cannot derive the content of the community from its concept. So even though the community has a “spiritual” character, whereby individuals realize a self that is in virtue of the community to which they belong, the community is itself individuated by features that are natural in the sense of being contingently given. For example, the community is going to be a community of a certain people within certain geographical bounds with certain natural features.

A people here signifies a population that has an identity given apart from the structure of “spiritual essence,” which could in principle be shared by or separately realized by a plurality of peoples. This identity might involve racial, ethnic, linguistic, or other cultural differences.

The same thing applies to the law of the community. In every case, the law will have a particular content that is given independently of the form of this type of community, whose members interact in recognition of a preexisting law by means of which they realize the kind of self that they have in this community. The laws will have a particular given character, which cannot be derived from the concept of the community any more than can the character of the people or its territory.

The activities that members of the community engage in can negatively be specified as no longer consisting in making the law or testing the law. Those activities have been found to fail as means for individuals to validate their certainty of finding the world to be their self-actualization. Positively speaking, their activities instead consist in fulfilling the laws as they are given, fulfilling roles marked by the same “natural,” contingently given content as the laws themselves. What the roles are, as well as how they are differentiated and distributed, is left open by the general nature of the lawful community of “spiritual essence.”

Hegel will employ the term “*Sittlichkeit*” or ethical community to refer to the lawful community that is here at issue. It is important to recognize that this ethical community is not identical with what he describes as ethical community in his *Philosophy of Right*. In the latter work, which comprises Hegel’s systematic ethics, he is conceiving the institutions of self-determination, which alone have normative validity. Accordingly, the laws and roles of normative ethical community have a very specific content, consisting in the realization of the modes of self-determination of the three spheres of normative ethical community: the emancipated family, the genuinely civil society, and the self-governing state. By contrast, here in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel introduces *Sittlichkeit* or ethical community in connection with a shape of consciousness where the community in question has “naturally” given laws



and roles, whose contingent character is at odds with the requirements of self-determination.

We are about to observe what happens when consciousness participates in this type of world.

Hegel notes that from here on in we will be encountering configurations of consciousness that involve the shape of a world. Although these involve institutions that are intersubjective, they still involve the opposition of consciousness and the difference between certainty and truth, between the relation of consciousness to its object and what that object is in itself. Consciousness will be immersed in intersubjective practices that command authority, but the participants in these practices will be engaged in validating their involvements and doing so in a way that still fits within the opposition of consciousness. In some respect, a distinction will be drawn between what counts as the standard of truth and that which is to be validated.

Can the members of the naturally determined ethical community validate their certainty that theirs is a world in which they are fully actualized? Can they understand this to be a world in which they are at home with themselves, in which the unity of the category has become total? The identity of the category is no longer something to be found in an object opposing them, as in observation. Here the category applies to a world to which they belong. Consciousness is not judging anything from the outside anymore. Consciousness is very much within the community whose validity it seeks to uphold.

Hegel proceeds to delineate this “natural” ethical community in ways that mirror aspects of ancient Greece as they are represented in works of classical fine art, religion, and philosophy. One must question whether the particular details that Hegel provides are necessary parts of this configuration of consciousness or whether they are just examples that illustrate it without being essential to it.

We now have before us consciousness as a member of a given ethical community. The laws and corresponding roles of membership have a given character and are accepted as authoritative by the members. The laws are regarded as substantial. They are not viewed as inessential strictures because individuals find themselves confronted with something merely given. Rather, individuals are aware of belonging to a community whose given law applies to all its members and is regarded by all as valid and not as alien to them. This ethical community is something in which their reason is exemplified, something in which each consciousness can be conscious of itself as at one with that community. Their true self is recognized by them to be tied to the performance of the roles that uphold their lawful community.

The community has its law, which is given and determinate. Accordingly, as Hegel observes, the law falls into determinate arenas or what he calls spheres.<sup>1</sup> To begin with, Hegel does not indicate how many such spheres there are or what content they have or how individuals fall within them.

When he begins to observe them in operation, however, these spheres turn out to be two in number. One sphere gets characterized as the household and the other gets characterized as the public, political arena. Although all individuals are members of the community, not all actively participate in both spheres. Whereas every individual may belong to a household, only some household members are free to participate in the sphere of political association.

Need natural ethical community, as involving a shape of consciousness, have distinct spheres and ones that are divided in precisely this way? If there are different spheres with distinct laws and roles, could all individuals participate simultaneously in them all? Would not any exclusions undermine the possibility of individuals recognizing their world to be the actualization of themselves, rather than of something alien?

Hegel disregards these questions and observes the ethical community to contain a law of the household and a law of the polis or the state. The first can be considered the private sphere and the second the public sphere. Further, Hegel distinguishes the laws of these spheres as human and divine. The laws of the state are considered human, whereas the laws of the household are held to be divine.<sup>2</sup>

One might consider the laws of the state to be human insofar as they are products of human activity, of human enactment. Yet, ethical community is such that its laws are given and the lawful activity of its members does not consist in lawgiving, let alone law testing. One could still consider the laws of the state to be human in origin along the lines of how ancient historians and philosophers account for them. Namely, the laws could be provided by someone who does not belong to the community, a foreigner who gives it its constitution, enabling the community to have laws that are not partial to any of its members. Indeed, it might be argued, to prevent laws from being to the benefit of some as opposed to all citizens, the activity of lawmaking should be excluded from occurring within the community. More generally, the act of founding a body politic is different from the activity of participating in the lawful exercise of political life in an existing state. Accordingly, the constitutional law of the body politic is something human, even if citizens do not make it in engaging in constitutional political activity.

These considerations may enable us to consider the laws of the state to be human, but we still face the question of why the laws of the household should be divine and what that signifies in the context of the natural ethical community to which consciousness belongs.

It should be kept in mind that insofar as these two laws are attributed to distinct household and political spheres, the human laws are not identical to civil, private law consisting in the laws of property that modern social contract theorists will privilege. The human laws instead pertain to the distinctly public activities that animate political association. By contrast, the

divine law, as governing the household, is restricted to the relationships of the family, including relations between spouses, parents and children, and siblings. These kinship relations involve distinctions connected to the natural differences at play in reproduction, childrearing, and hereditary ties in general. Such naturally conditioned relationships stand in contrast to the conventional relationships of the public sphere that abstract from kinship and call for a fundamentally different kind of allegiance directed at the universal good of the political community, rather than at the particular private good of the household.

The divine law accordingly deals with individuals in a very different way from how human law deals with them. Divine law concerns naturally mediated relations that are imbued with ethical significance in that they prescribe a lawful pattern of conduct that is already embodied in the life of the household. As such, the divine law addresses the individual as a participant in not the public, political activities of rule, but the private activities in which individuals relate to one another in terms of their natural character. Hegel makes a point of calling the subject of divine law “the self.” It involves the individual in its natural individuality, which inevitably passes from life to death, becoming a “shadow,” a “shade” removed from all its particular entanglements. The divine law will thus address the dead as removed from the human world and its law, which concerns the individual not as a natural being, but as a citizen. In this respect, the divine law pertains to the individual as individual, whereas the human law deals with individuals in their universal capacity as participants in public life.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, Hegel at times speaks of the divine law having a true universality of its own.<sup>4</sup> How could the divine law have a universality that would not be shared by the human law of the community, which would then not be as genuinely universal? The human law is the law of a natural ethical community, which as such, is a particular community, with a given people and territory distinguishing its laws from those of other particular communities. The human law may pertain to the public life of all citizens, but it is not world embracing. Its jurisdiction is limited to one political community among others. So even though human law deals with individuals in their capacity as members of their community at large, it is still tainted by the particularity of that community. By contrast, divine law applies to the naturally conditioned relations of the family, which are not restricted to the boundaries of any single state or group of states. By transcending the confines of the community governed by human law, the law of the family also cannot derive from the activity of some external human legislator who might provide the law to the particular body politic. Since the law of the family thus transcends the human origins of human law, the law of the family, which addresses the individual as a mortal individual, can count as being divine in origin.

Hegel draws another distinction between divine and human law, whose role is more obscure. He speaks of the divine law as having an unconscious or undisclosed character, whereas the human law is present to all in the light of day.<sup>5</sup> This distinction later plays a role in explaining how individuals acting on the basis of one type of law are oblivious to the claims of the law that their activity ends up opposing. Human law would be consciously manifest to the extent that it regulates expressly public behavior, which operates in open recognition of it, whereas divine law pertains to the private realm of the family, following natural factors that operate at least partly on the level of instinctual urges of which individuals need not be conscious to be affected.

Given these distinctions, are separate spheres of human and divine law generic to the structure of natural ethical community in which consciousness finds itself? If natural ethical community is going to be the context within which consciousness will validate itself as having a lawful realization that makes true objectivity actualize its self-consciousness, then consciousness will need a law that is not restricted to the particular confines of its given community. There must be some dimension that can extend beyond that, even though ethical community cannot help but have a particular existence, bounded by other communities. So, it might appear that consciousness needs to have this other, divine law to secure a truly universal self-actualization. If not, the plurality of different spheres with different human laws only exacerbates the problem of the particularity of the natural ethical community, inserting alien factors within the community itself.

Need, however, the scope of the two types of law diverge? Must divine law apply to all and must human law apply only to the privileged adults who are permitted entry into political association? Or could natural ethical community contain a human law that equally applies to all? Unless human law governs all individuals, enabling all to participate in lawfully sustaining the community to which they belong, their common work forfeits its universal domestic reach, impeding the universal self-actualization of conscious individuals. Moreover, on what basis should the activities of fulfilling divine and human law be differently allocated? Is there any reason for why gender should play a deciding role, restricting women to the household? Does gender privilege and disadvantage not impede the epistemological agenda of consciousness as spirit?

The formal structure of ethical community makes it unavoidable that the content of laws and roles will have a contingent given character. Consequently, individuals will be allotted to different activities and different determinate spheres of law on the basis of given factors as contingent as those spheres and their animating activities.

Insofar as the members of ethical community are living animal individuals, the community must provide for their birth, upbringing, and reproduction, as well as for their other survival needs. To the extent that reproduction

occurs through bisexual reproduction, gender differences will be present, as will hereditary groupings reflected in race and ethnicity. The activities providing for the species being and survival of the members of the community must be provided for and ought to be provided as engagements in lawful self-actualization to uphold the rationality of the world to which consciousness belongs. Accordingly, we must expect consciousness to find itself in an ethical community containing different spheres with laws of their own reflecting these requirements.

These considerations provide for distinct private household and public political spheres, while also providing a basis for how a universal, divine law could regulate the former, while a particular, human law could order the latter. The human law applies to this community and unites the particular people inhabiting it, whereas the divine law concerns a domain with which all peoples must contend, a domain with a universality addressing the individual as a mortal individual, not as just a Greek or a Persian.

How then does this natural ethical community function and can its members validate the rationality they impute to it? The key question is how the separate spheres operate in conjunction with one another. As presented, they have a certain interdependence, as they well should if the ethical community is to uphold its unity and maintain itself. The political sphere requires the family to provide for its population and bring them up to adult independence and then deal with the natural end of life when it removes individuals back out of the public arena. The household thereby functions as Aristotle portrays it in book I of his *Politics*, as an association sufficient for dealing with birth, child rearing, and the daily recurrent needs of survival. The household, however, does not suffice for its own protection or for what is required to maintain the state. Hence, just as the state needs the household to provide for the natural needs of its people, so the household needs the state to protect it and enable its members to participate in the activities governed by human law. These two spheres thus appear to be complementary, whether or not different individuals perform leading roles as protectors of the divine law of the family and of the human law of the state.

Conceivably, assignment by gender to each sphere could be reversed or other natural factors could operate as the dividing point or all individuals could participate in both spheres. Would any or all of these possible arrangements affect whether or not the different spheres could coexist without conflict and whether individuals find themselves unable to validate their certainty that they are at home in their world?

Are we dealing with a community in which reciprocity is lacking, such as the unequal relationship of master and servant? Or is the natural ethical community one in which individuals find themselves conflicted and alienated over their roles, where they find themselves in a specific relationship to a

certain kind of law due to a natural difference, when they really aspire to be in a different position?

Hegel points out that insofar as the ethical community has a given character with given determinate spheres and determinate laws, individuals do not have their roles by choice but find their station and their laws to be what they are.<sup>6</sup> Their self-realizations are bound to the arrangement at hand and what it requires them to do reaffirms this arrangement. There is no question of making new laws of one's own or using one's insight to test laws. Yet, due to the presence of determinate spheres and their determinate laws, there is a question of with which laws will individuals identify. Will it be the divine law or the human law?

On the face of it, the ethical community seems to be organized so as to preclude any conflict and concern for such a choice. Since household and state complement one another, they appear only to reaffirm one another. Nonetheless, when we observe how individuals act on the basis of this kind of community, conflicts do arise and these conflicts have fateful ramifications for individuals' attempt to validate their certainty of actualizing themselves in this world.

## PART 2

In paragraph 447, Hegel speaks of the human law as being worthy of being called "human" because it is the essential form of an actuality that is conscious of itself. It has a universality consisting in being a known law existing in the customs at hand. Human law enjoys publicity in contrast to divine law, which, as Hegel notes in paragraph 449, is instilled in the family as the unconscious bond of its association.

In paragraph 450 Hegel characterizes the relation among family members as fundamentally ethical. Here "ethical" signifies something specific to ethical community. It describes a normative involvement in a lawful community that is regarded by the individual member as substantial, as something that has an independent being of its own that the individual cannot attempt to set aside or judge with detachment. The ethical is rather something to which individuals have to belong in order to be what they are and to regard themselves as one with the world in which they find themselves.

Accordingly, the proper ethical relation among family members is not a relation of feeling or a relation of love. It cannot be a relation of feeling because feeling lacks universality and is contingent. There can be no guarantee that the feelings of family members will be abidingly in harmony or conform with the law upholding the household. Feeling is something singular and contingent upon the person who has the feeling. It has no necessary

connection to being a member of the household and performing the activities of that membership.

Love might appear to be more appropriate and Hegel will sometimes speak of love as having a spiritual character. Here, in fact, he describes love as being a relationship where one individual finds wholeness only in entering a relation to another. The beloved find themselves to be incomplete without being part of this unity. Each has an I that is fully realized only as a we.

In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel does depict normative marriage as involving a relation of ethical love.<sup>7</sup> This ethical love is distinct from the contingencies of romantic feeling and instead involves an ethical commitment between spouses to care for their property and welfare in common.

Here, Hegel notes that neither feeling nor love suffice for comprising the ethical bond of the household of natural ethical community. This is because this ethical community involves an association whose members relate to it as their substance, as that which gives their actions their purpose and actuality. Feeling is too subjective whereas love, in abstraction from the ethical bond of marriage, is not directed to an abiding substance. Individuals may be in love and feel incomplete without one another, but love can be fallen in and out of if all it involves is this mutual feeling. Moreover, love can enter into conflict with the bonds of the family. Extramarital affairs can wreck marriages and leave parental duties unattended.

To be genuinely ethical, the positive purpose of the family does not lie in the feeling of the individual or the mutual feelings of a couple, but in a shared commitment to household community. This is not a matter of performing particular services contingent upon certain circumstances, nor a matter of just providing custodial care that is transitory. It rather concerns an ongoing commitment to an abiding association.

Accordingly, Hegel, in paragraph 450, observes how family membership ultimately concerns something that transcends the particulars of the sensuous actuality of its individuals, which is transitory and contingent. The substantial unity of the household rather embraces its members with indifference to all of the contingencies of their being. The concern of the family extends beyond the accidentalities of mortal existence.

This universal standing of the family member is reminiscent of “the thing that matters,” “*die Sache selbst*,” which had to be a pure determinable factor because one could not realize oneself in a particular work, since its particularity always involved something incongruous with the self. Here, analogously, the object of ethical concern within the household is the family member taken in respect to its sheer membership in the family. This concern is completely indifferent to any particular aspect of the individual that would require some particular, conditioned engagement.

Admittedly, family relations still have a contingent, accidental character, in that its members are particular living individuals subject to all the exter-

nalities of life in the world. Nevertheless, the ethical bond of the household directs itself to its members in respect to their sheer membership, which is the basis of the sheer duty that family members have to one another. This universal comportment allows for retaining an ethical concern for the family member when all the particular aspects and entanglements of mortal life have slipped away and all that is left is the “shade” of the deceased.

This is why the paradigmatic divine law has to do with the treatment of the dead. Hegel describes this ultimate divine law in paragraph 452 as dealing with the individual family member not in terms of feeling for the living mortal, but as expressing a duty to the individual as departed, as freed of all the contingencies of physical existence. All other relations that pertain to the living individual can come under the purview of human law. In this respect, the human law concerns matters that do pertain to family members in their live actuality.

The divine law concerning the dead deals with the individual in its purely abstract individuality as family member, having left but one tie, the kinship tie, to bind the individual to its ethical substance. There is, however, another side to this divine law, which concerns which living family member will be specially attached to its implementation.

Hegel surveys the different family relations to indicate which one would have any particular concern with the other-worldly dimension of the deceased, in which the purely spiritual aspect of ethical community is crystalized. As he notes in paragraph 455, the natural relation of man and wife centers upon sexual reproduction, driven by natural lust. This relationship is not a real ethical relationship in which spouses can recognize themselves as a party to a non-natural, spiritual unity. Marriage may represent itself as ethical, but so long as it remains based upon natural reproduction, it cannot provide individuals with a self-actualization satisfying the demands of reason.

A truer spiritual union might be found in relation to the children that marriage produces. They have an existence that abides even when the reproductive relationship and its accompanying sentiments disappear. Parents thus give their relationship to one another an actuality that is missing from their merely natural and lustful bonds. Through their children, they give their relationship a character that has a further significance for the community as a whole, contributing to the succession of generations on which its continuance depends. Still, as Hegel points out, this relationship is only transitory. Children do not have any abiding relationship to the parents that is genuinely ethical in character. Upon reaching independent maturity, grown up children leave their erstwhile home behind and set out to participate in political association and/or to form a household of their own.

This leaves one remaining family relationship in which something truly ethical may be found: the relation of siblings. It is this relation that Hegel



invokes as having a special connection to the divine law concerning treatment of the dead.

The sibling relationship is the one family bond that traditionally involves the equality of the parties. This is exhibited in the appropriation of the term “brotherhood” to all sorts of relationships in which individuals are to be regarded as equals. By contrast, inequality reigns in the traditional heterosexual relation of marriage and the relation of parents to children.

Not surprisingly, the sibling relationship of brotherhood is treated in ancient thought as a surrogate for what the family ought to be if it were to realize itself as an ethical community, without being marred by the privileging of natural differences. Similarly, the sibling relationship of equals here stands in to best exhibit the ethical character of the divine law of the household.

The sibling relationship has another feature that Hegel notes in connecting it to the implementation of the divine law. Besides comprising a relationship between equals that does not pass away as does the parental relation with the maturation of children, the sibling bond does not have physical, natural desire as an inherent part of its relationship.<sup>8</sup>

These signal features of the sibling bond are important, but the observation of how the spheres of divine and human laws interact depends upon one further qualification: that the siblings in question be sister and brother. It is not simply that this fits the historical example of Antigone, who invokes the divine law to demand a proper burial of her brother in defiance of Creon. Rather, the relation of sister and brother connects the sphere of divine law with that of human law because the sister, as a woman, is confined to the household, whereas her brother, as a man, has lived in the public sphere of the state. On this basis, the sister can have a special allegiance to the divine law, which, as applied to her brother, will necessarily confront the demands of human law.

What then ensues when the paradigmatic divine law is advanced by its paradigmatic proponent? In paragraph 461 and 462, Hegel notes that there is a certain equilibrium between the two spheres of ethical community. The household and the body politic depend upon one another and therefore divine and human laws complement one another as well. Ethical community as a whole might therefore seem to be a world undefiled by any division, with each sphere peacefully preserving and bringing forth its counterpart. This might be true if the ethical community were devoid of natural distinctions, realizing spiritual unity without compromise. Such a situation would apply to the different spheres of the institutions of freedom that Hegel conceives in his *Philosophy of Right*, where the emancipated household, civil society, and self-government not only depend upon one another for their realization, but can be actualized without any inherent contradiction insofar as they are properly determined as universal structures of self-determination, untainted by

natural determination. Hegel himself does not completely succeed in doing so in the *Philosophy of Right*. His account of the emancipated family is marred by an adherence to natural differences, limiting marriage to a heterosexual relationship, privileging the husband as master of the household, and restricting women to domestic activities. These impediments to family self-determination carry over into Hegel's account of civil society, within which women have no equal part and estate divisions allow birth to determine social opportunity. Similarly, in Hegel's conception of the emancipated state, women remain excluded from equal participation, an estate assembly ties political privilege to birthright, and a constitutional monarch binds the head of state to a hereditary succession. Nonetheless, if Hegel's systematic ethics of freedom is properly reconstructed, the roots of inherent opposition between ethical spheres are eliminated.

In the natural ethical community of divine and human laws, however, the possibility of conflict cannot be excluded. When a sister, restricted to the household, identifies herself with the divine law as it applies to her brother's corpse, the human law is liable to challenge. The brother has been participating in the sphere of human law, where his opposition to ruling authorities cannot help but have consequences. Prey to the conflicts within domestic political life and between different regimes, those who risk entering the public stage must contend with the different allegiances of particular political groups and states. These are liable to conflict with the observance of the universal demands of divine law, which are indifferent to worldly concerns. For this reason, a woman, who is restricted to the household and accordingly identifies herself with the law of the household, will readily find herself in opposition to the public law when she applies the divine law to a brother who has been entangled in the political arena. Conflict is not unlikely to break out, as it does in the example of Antigone, who seeks to give her brother the burial sanctioned by divine law but prohibited by the political authorities her brother opposed.

The inherent roots of conflict lie in the universal, unconscious character of the divine law of the family and the public but particular character of the human law of the state. These differences of the two spheres foster incommensurable ethical commitments despite the complementary interdependence of family and state.

As Hegel observes, there is nothing comic about how such conflict ensues. The antagonists are not appealing to different laws of the heart, whose opposition is subjective. Nor are the antagonists promulgating or testing laws with opposing results that rest upon the arbitrariness of the contrasting contents and form. A conflict between individuals who attach themselves to opposing laws would be a comedy if the opposition proved itself to be subjective and devoid of intrinsic significance. We could laugh at the much

ado about nothing, from which the participants walk away with only ridicule to bear.

Here, however, the conflict of divine and human laws concerns ethical commitments that are each substantial, yet irreconcilable. Each ethical sphere is an objectively existing substance on the ground of which its members have their own true reality by observing the law that itself is realized through their lawful activity. They cannot abandon their ethical commitment to their particular ethical power because they are what they are in virtue of that commitment. Each ethical sphere has an immediate absolute content and authority that need not harmonize with other ethical spheres and communities, yet is insusceptible of adjudication by any higher power. This entails a genuinely tragic conflict, whose antagonists necessarily face destruction due to their adherence to the objective law of the ethical sphere to which they belong. The tragic protagonists are not themselves conflicted over what law to follow. They each immediately subscribe to the law that is already embodied in the association they inhabit. What are in conflict are the laws themselves.

We have the woman who, in virtue of her natural character, is restricted to the household, identifies with its divine law, and regards the competing claims of the human law to violate the ethical bonds in which her true self is actualized. Conversely, there are the public authorities who, in virtue of their given membership in the body politic, have their truth in the human law that is equally violated by the contrary demands of divine law. The woman, as sister of the brother whose burial is prohibited by the state, takes the action of observing the divine law in violation of the human law. She tries to bury her brother in the way dictated by the divine law.

What is the character and outcome of this deed? Hegel observes the deed and its relation to its perpetrator in the subsequent discussion of guilt and crime. This, of course, is hardly the first time that we have had a chance to observe deeds being done and see them identified with the doer. Consciousness as reason earlier grappled with observing action and trying to identify some lawful connection between the action and the doer that might determine the limits of responsibility. Deed and action were distinguished in light of how purpose and intention were not reflected in all ramifications of the deed. Here, in the conflict of the protagonists of divine and human laws, what alone counts is the deed in all its public manifestation. It is what it publicly shows itself to be, irrespective of what hidden motives accompany its performance. The fulfillment in deed of the law is the individual's self-realization. There is thus no question of the perpetrator not being held responsible for what she does.

Antigone can no more question her responsibility for what she does than can Oedipus. The concern for how intention circumscribes the limits of responsibility is not relevant in the natural ethical community. If one were to make appeal to intention to let Oedipus escape responsibility and punishment

for incest and patricide, one would separate the deed from the perpetrator. The deed would be something external to the individual, although there is a causal relationship between the individual and the deed the individual perpetrates. What the individual is responsible for, however, is different from what the individual causes to happen if intention is allowed to limit responsibility. Then, only the part of the deed prefigured in intention is the action for which the agent is held culpable.

The distinction between action and deed is not in play in the tragic conflict of divine and human laws. This is not because members of natural ethical community have no purposes and intentions that are distinguishable from their deeds. Obviously Antigone, Oedipus, and any other living individual in a community of any sort can intend any number of things that may deviate from what they actually accomplish when they act on purpose. Rather, the members of ethical community regard the relation of intention to deed to be irrelevant to the significance of what they do.

We are here dealing with a conflict where all the individuals involved consider what is essentially their own to be embodied in the ethical spheres to which they belong. What passions and agonies lie within themselves apart from the lawful fulfillment of these associations have no essential meaning for them. These inner conflicts may well be present. Achilles can go off and sulk in his tent. What counts, however, is what one does and not one's inner attitude toward what one performs. This is because the subjectivity in play sees its own true self to be actualized in the ethical world and the lawful activities that comprise it. Nothing hidden in the recesses of the self is the individual's own true being. Such merely subjective factors are an animus, a madness foreign to the what the individual knows to be its genuine self. The interiority that will be of central importance in the shape of consciousness of morality does not yet possess independent validity.

Instead, the antagonists completely identify with what they do and everyone identifies them with what they do. Their actions exhibit their complete commitment to their particular ethical law. In this commitment, each side is unconscious or oblivious to the pull of the claims of its opponent. Their conflict is simply that of distinct ethical powers, which each have substantial, absolute standing for their members.

It is noteworthy that Hegel will remark in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* that one cannot have tragedy in the modern world, at least not tragedy as defined by an opposition of ethical powers with which individuals immediately identify in a conflict that cannot be resolved. The modern world will no longer have place for a natural ethical community, whose contingently given content cannot accord with the conceptually determinate laws of the institutions of freedom that distinguish modernity.<sup>9</sup>

Here, however, we are observing such a natural ethical community and we must consider how its internal conflict resolves itself. Each side must

regard the activity of its opponent as a crime, violating the law with which it immediately identifies. Each side must equally regard its own activity as lawful. Hence, no peaceful reconciliation is possible. The only way the conflict can be overcome is through the destruction of one or both sides.

The perpetrators are completely committed to the law of their ethical sphere and cannot detach themselves from it without forsaking their true self, which has its actualization in the lawful activities of that sphere. For this reason, as Hegel notes, each side must oppose its counterpart without compromise.

Nonetheless, does one side have an intrinsic advantage over its opponent? The divine law has family members on its side, but the human law has the power of the state in its defense. The divine law upheld by Antigone may be supported by her other family members, but there is hardly any guarantee that she will find support from the members of other families with no kinship relation to her own. Lacking a blood relation to her brother, these members of other households are members of the state, to whose human law they owe an allegiance that does not directly conflict with the divine law as it applies to them. So there is an inequality, suggesting that the tragic conflict will likely end with the destruction of the upholder of the divine law and the survival of the much larger and more powerful cohort of supporters of human law.

Hegel, however, suggests that the conflict of ethical powers does not thereby resolve itself in a way that leaves ethical community intact as a whole. Instead, because no side has any inherent privilege of authority, the conflict strikes at the very validity of ethical community, which cannot remain unscathed. The destruction of one side signals a mutual destruction, for the fabric of ethical community is ripped apart, leaving in tatters the whole effort of consciousness to validate its certainty that the ethical world is its self-actualization. So long as different ethical spheres can stand in conflict, no individual can have a self-actualization that is the lawful reality of the whole ethical order. There still remains something alien within the world to which consciousness belongs.

In this light, Hegel cites other cases of ethical conflict that lack the inequality of powers of the opposition of Antigone and Creon, where the family member who commits a "crime" against human law can so easily be crushed by the power of the state. These examples drawn from classical tragedy involve conflicts between brothers whose competition for political power bring in family relationships as well.<sup>10</sup> Are such conflicts really endemic to natural ethical community?

Natural ethical community has given laws, given spheres, and given distributions of membership in these different spheres. The dividing lines have a certain contingency to themselves, although the distinguishing of a private family sphere from the public political sphere may not itself be accidental.

Does, however, there really have to a distinction between *oikos* and *polis*, between a household and the state in natural ethical community? There are tribal societies where all relationships are determined by kinship relations. Can they be ethical communities or must ethical community have a sphere that has been liberated from kinship relations, allowing individuals to relate to one another not in terms of blood or kinship but in terms of a more universal bond defined by law?

The epistemological demands of consciousness have come to require that individuals find their self-actualization in a community that is law governed, for only then can the activities of individuals have sufficient universality to allow the ethical world to be an objectivity in which every member can be conscious of itself as being essentially at home. The natural particularity of kinship relations undercuts that necessary universality. On the other hand, the living reality of individuals demands that the universal community of public, political, lawful activity also provide for the natural requirements of life and reproduction, calling for a household that thereby shares in the validity of ethical community. To be properly ethical, however, that household must fulfill a law that is itself universal, a law that pertains to the individual as just a member of its sphere, apart from the natural differences of mortal existence.

These provisos and the tragic conflict they engender confront the consciousness of the members of the ethical order with what Hegel calls "fate." The notion of fate is, of course, something that prominently figures in ancient Greek tragedy. What is it and how is it really endemic to the conflict of ethical powers? In paragraph 471 Hegel observes how the movement of conflicting ethical powers reaches its true end when both sides experience a common demise. Neither side is really privileged because there is no higher principle to adjudicate between different sets of laws that are each immediately authoritatively given to those they govern. Nor is anyone in a position to withdraw from the ethical community and revert to an engagement in giving new laws or testing laws. The substantiality of the ethical community has emerged from the experience of the failure of those engagements, which no longer can be a tenable option.

How does this predicament leave all members of the ethical order subject to a fate consisting in the destruction of the ethical community through the irreconcilable conflict of members of its different spheres? The key lies in how natural ethical community has a given content filling out its form of spiritual essence. Because that content is extrinsically given, it does not have any preestablished harmony built into it. Not only may the externally given contents of different laws and different spheres within the ethical community leave room for opposition, but the particular given content of each ethical community leaves it in possible conflict with other particular ethical communities beyond its borders.

The fate that governs these incipient conflicts is experienced to be both just and omnipotent. This fate or *Schicksal* is just because it consists in what is intrinsic to the ethical substance itself. The workings of natural ethical community give rise to the conflict and impel the conflict to the only possible resolution it can have. Adherence to the justice of each competing ethical power is precisely what generates the conflict and determines its outcome. The resolution ends up devouring both competing sides as they originally confront one another as complementary elements of a single ethical community. Nonetheless, it does not violate what counts as ethical for the members of that community. The fate of this denouement cannot be rejected by either party as an imposition of external norms. Rather, it is a truly tragic fate, inherent in what conscious individuals here know themselves to be. This immanence of the fate is what gives it its omnipotence. It cannot be resisted because those who befall it become its victim in virtue of the self-actualization in which they have their own truth. To be members of the natural ethical community is to fall prey to this fate in all its irresistible justice and omnipotence.

Those who commit what is a crime in the eyes of their opponents have no basis for escaping retaliation. Their common fate operates through their own activities, not on the basis of some *deus ex machina*, lying beyond their ethical community. Reconciliation is precluded because none of the protagonists can dissociate themselves from what they do. They bring their fate upon themselves. They inhabit what is supposed to be a united ethical community with complementary spheres that enable all to affirm themselves in upholding its laws. What they discover is that their community ends up fracturing through its own internal logic.

Hegel has described the root of this demise in the opposing content of the divine and human laws, which divide between family and body politic. The possibility of an irreconcilable conflict between household and state has been resurrected by John Rawls<sup>11</sup> and other liberal theorists like James Fishkin,<sup>12</sup> who argue that there is an inherent opposition between the family and justice. Family relations involve a partiality mediated by blood or kinship that goes against the universal entitlements of individuals in the broader scheme of justice that the state upholds. Nepotism counts as a wrong from the point of view of the administration of justice, whose commitment to the impartial realization of right cannot allow the partiality of the household to extend to other spheres. It appears, however, that there is no way to prevent that intrusion of nepotism as long as families are maintained. How individuals are cared for by their kin cannot help but effect how successfully they do in society and state.

Can the private and public spheres be demarcated so that there is no inherent conflict? Rawls points out that it is impossible to prevent families from becoming engines of privilege and disadvantage simply because one

cannot prevent individuals from undergoing different treatments in different families, which will impact upon their performances in other domains.<sup>13</sup> These differences are not just a matter of how much resources over which families dispose. No matter what families possess, there will be discrepancies in how parents treat their children, as well as in how siblings treat one another. Some people are going to have better parents and experience a better upbringing than others, even if they share the same socioeconomic status. So, it seems, the only way to prevent this is by eliminating the family and having collective upbringing, such as Plato applies to his guardians.

Such are the concerns that ascribe an inherent irreconcilable conflict to family and state due to the incommensurability between the universality and impartiality of citizenship and the particularity and partiality of the household.

There is, however, a further aspect with seeds of conflict of its own. This consists in the accompanying contrast of divine and human laws. The divine law deals with the individual as a pure individual, detached from all the particularities of mortal life, save for membership in the family. The state may have a certain universal reach, but it is still a single body politic among others, particular with respect to its population, territory, laws, and customs. There can therefore be no guarantee that there will be any automatic harmony between one state and any other or between the divine law and the human law.

More generally, so long as ethical community involves determinate spheres distinguished by immediately given contents, there will be place for conflicts disrupting the union of the whole. Although this will be the case of any natural ethical community, whose form does not mandate its specific content, it will not be the case of an ethical community whose unity determines its own differentiation into distinct spheres. Then there is no need to worry about conflicts because the differentiation of such an ethical community is nothing other than the expression and maintenance of its unity. It would be like a healthy organism, whose distinct organs intrinsically function to uphold one another and the whole to which they belong. Admittedly, extraneous disease may disrupt that unity, but no fate will bring about its demise through its own workings.

The unity of natural ethical community lacks that thoroughgoing inner difference, which we have seen associated with both self-consciousness and the concept. Accordingly, natural ethical community is rife with oppositions for which no authoritative and final adjudication is available. This holds true both within its domestic territory and in its relations with other natural ethical communities. The fate disrupting each ethical community is equally manifest in the kind of warfare that the ancient Greeks engaged in, where what awaited the loser was destruction and enslavement.



Consciousness accordingly experiences that the general basis of the demise of its natural ethical community lies in the particularity of its given character. The ethical substance has revealed itself in truth to be the workings of the fate that overcomes that particularity and the ethical unity that contains it. Hegel characterizes this outcome as a state of legality<sup>14</sup> presided over by a “lord of the world.”<sup>15</sup> This legal condition has shed the particular contents of the natural ethical order and in so embracing the purified law of universal property relations, of the “*Sache selbst*,” it has acquired an equally world-embracing scope.

### PART 3

Hegel has used the term “substance” in regard to the natural ethical community because it is self-subsistent and the individuals that belong to it are its “accidents” in that they are part and parcel of this ethical community, having no genuine existence apart from it. Their defining agency is something that they have in virtue of their membership and consequently they cannot stand back and extricate themselves from their community. It makes no sense for them to subject its laws to a testing by reason. The substance of the natural ethical community consists of their behavior and that behavior can only be engaged in if the community is already at hand. Their activity does not produce a product that does not contain the activity that produces it. Their activity instead reproduces the ethical community to which they belong as members of the ethical community. They do not engage in any lawmaking. Rather, they engage in lawful activity that actualizes the laws they observe as well as their own agency.

There are some who argue that individuals cannot have political freedom unless they have the freedom to determine everything about the body politic. Unless individuals have the power to make the constitution of their state, they cannot be free in belonging to and being subject to that constitutional order. The making of the constitution, as opposed to amending the constitution, is not itself, however, a constitutional activity. Constitution making does not reproduce something nor is it part of what it brings into being. By contrast, a constitutional order can include an activity of legislating such as is found in any modern constitutional state. Significantly, one can only engage in the activity of constitutional lawmaking by being a member of a preexisting body politic so structured as to provide legislative institutions to engage in.

There thus can be an ethical community whose members engage in legislative activity, unlike natural ethical community, whose given law is not made by those subject to it. This is indicative of how there can be an ethical community that does not have a naturally given character. Hegel, in his

*Philosophy of Right*, attempts to conceive the institutions of freedom, having established elsewhere that normativity can reside in nothing other than self-determination. He there goes about laying out household, social, and political spheres of ethical community that should be structured independently of natural givenness. I have tried to remedy his failure to do so in a consistent fashion in a series of books, *Reason and Justice*, *The Just Family*, *The Just Economy*, *Law and Civil Society*, and *The Just State*.<sup>16</sup>

Here, in the *Phenomenology*, we are about to observe another sort of remedy to the pitfalls of natural ethical community. This remedy arises from consciousness's experience of the operation of fate that reveals how natural ethical community undermines the actuality of the natural particularity of its own law, roles, and ethical spheres. What consciousness discovers is that in truth the community of law is a universal, world legal condition or *Rechtszustand*, rather than an ethical order restricted to a particular people and territory. Only with that universality and global reach can the legal order provide consciousness with an abstract self or personhood that it can find realized in the whole world it confronts.

To understand how this is so, it is important to consider the aspect that Hegel brings in rather late in the game, in paragraph 474, where he refers to the role of war in the ethical order. War functions as another side of fate, accompanying the irreconcilable struggle of different ethical spheres within the natural ethical community, whose antagonists have no way of reconciling their conflict. The same kind of irreconcilable conflict takes place at the level of the opposition of one natural ethical community to another, because both have laws particular to one another and cannot make appeal to any higher principle or authority that could adjudicate their oppositions. Consequently, there is an inescapable fate that extends both domestically and internationally. Nowhere in the world of natural ethical community can there be any asylum from its reach, which befalls the natural ethical order due to its own constitution.

In paragraph 475 Hegel observes what shape of consciousness arises from the demise of the natural ethical substance and of the restricted individuality that confronts other restricted individualities. Through the fate intrinsic to its own workings, the ethical community becomes purged of its own natural particular determinations, leaving a universal condition of a purified law to which everyone is now subject.

What now presides over all is law that has formal universality, different from the particular given laws animating the living spirit of natural ethical community. Whereas that ethical order united individuals through the concrete activities of membership in distinct ethical spheres, now what unites individuals is an abstract, formal law that applies to them with indifference to the particular content of their selves. Their own specific character is in no way determined by their bondage to this legal order to which they are subor-

dinate. The truth of the natural ethical community has turned out to be a general submission to a lawful power that is indifferent to the character of its subjects. They, for their part, now all equally treat one another as independent persons, who count only in respect to how the legal order governs them. Individuals confront one another as legal “persons,” subject to a community that unites them in this respect and this alone.

It is important to understand what personhood or personality signifies in this context. Kant uses the term “person” to distinguish moral agents from things. Hegel does not associate personhood here or in his *Philosophy of Right* with moral agency. Instead, he identifies personhood with the agency of being an owner. Translators commonly identify personhood or *Person* with legal personality or legal status. This is accurate only insofar as legality is restricted to property law, which is true of the civil law that pertains to property owners and regulates their relationships to one another as owners.

Hegel is going to distinguish between the person and the moral subject in ways that will become clear later on when we observe moral consciousness in the section entitled “Morality.” In his systematic ethics, Hegel conceives the personhood of property relations to be presupposed by moral agency insofar as one cannot be recognized as a moral agent unless one is also recognized as an owner, in particular, as owner of one’s bodily self. Otherwise one counts as a slave, whose actions are the responsibility of one’s owner. Since one’s body is that through which one is able to do anything, it must be recognized to be one’s own to engage in any further exercise of right. For this reason, one’s body is unique among objects of property in being inalienable. It cannot be alienated by the person as a transfer of property because to be able to withdraw one’s will from it, one must retain one’s status as a person. Yet, without title to one’s body, one loses all status as an owner and nothing one does counts as an action for which one is responsible. One cannot be a juridical agent apart from owning one’s body, despite those who incoherently claim that one could sell oneself into slavery.

Although moral agency must presuppose property ownership, in being recognized as an owner, one’s responsibility is not held to be determined by one’s motives in the way in which it will be in morality, where individuals hold one another responsible for acting with the right purposes and intentions. In operating as a person, one just has the status of an owner, where one’s purposes and intentions are really beside the point. What counts is that one has one’s ownership recognized and one does not violate the ownership of others. In this sphere of property strict liability applies, for what harms befall others due to one’s property are something for which one is liable, even if one did not intend any injury. This is completely different from moral responsibility, where accountability is tied to purpose and intention.

We now face the predicament of consciousness that results from the subordination of natural ethical community to fate, which turns out to be a

global submission to a power that lords over all individuals in a way that breaks the bonds of natural ethical community and instead treats them in the same lawful, formally universal manner, that is, as persons. As such, individuals are subjects of a universal legal condition that regulates their property and their property relations to others. They stand in lawful relation to one another as owners, but otherwise, they have no other bonds that have any legal status. Everyone is subject to a power that enforces the legality of their reality as persons, leaving open what occurs in any other sphere, so long as it does not violate property relations.

This is not a condition of the greatest personal freedom, for it equally signifies that the power that upholds the legal status of owners is at liberty to do whatever it wants so long as property is respected. Accordingly, the ruler of the world of this legal condition is free to exercise arbitrariness with regard to everything else. Individuals may be free to do as they please so long as they do not violate the property of others, but this liberty is subject to the important caveat that individuals must contend with the arbitrariness of the ruler of the legal empire.

Although legal recognition as a person upholds one's rights as an owner, it leaves completely unspecified what you own, what you do with your property so long as you do not violate the property of others, and what you do in any other respect, as long as you respect property ownership. Hegel observes that the situation of personality or personhood has something in common with that of stoicism and skepticism. As he notes in paragraph 478, the stoic withdraws from given actuality and retreats into the abstractness and self-identity of thinking in order to validate the certainty that what truly is is fundamentally his or her self. Just as the stoic was indifferent to the particular roles of the relationship of mastery and servitude from which it emerged, so personality arises from the demise of the particular given contents of the laws, roles, and ethical spheres of natural ethical community. In both cases a formal universality becomes identified with what is essential. In stoicism the formal universality is embraced in the form of thought. Here in the global legal condition of personhood, the formal universality has the form of actuality of an existing world order. This actual world might resemble the historical world of the Roman Empire under which stoicism flourished, but it accomplishes something beyond what the stoic enterprises. It provides self-consciousness a universal realization in a legal condition, whereas stoicism finds itself restricted to the unworldly domain of abstract thought. The person engages in more than thinking what is abstractly universal. To be a person is to determine oneself as an owner and this requires being able to lay one's will in a recognized way in some factor external to the abstract identity of one's will. Ownership must in the first instance apply to one's own body, since without being recognized as its owner, no action one takes to appropriate other things or dispose over property can be recognized to be one's own.

Thereafter, the object of property can be any external factor in which no other will is recognized to be embodied. That indifference of property to what figures as an object of ownership is paralleled in how the capacity to dispose over property is completely indifferent to one's gender, race, ethnicity, and any other natural difference not preventing the exercise of choice. Determining oneself as an owner is equally indifferent to what particular needs and desires one may have. Ownership is not tied to considerations of welfare, of the satisfaction of any particular ends. It simply concerns embodying one's will in an objective factor in a manner recognized by other persons. Accordingly, one need not desire what one owns, nor depend upon it for one's survival or happiness. Ownership concerns the self-determination of an abstractly universal self, where having the status of owner has no necessary connection to any particular contents in or without the person.

This indifference to particularity came up with the thing that matters, the *Sache selbst*, the purified work that could provide a vehicle of self-realization for an equally purified self-seeking validation of its certainty of reason. The recourse to this purified work arose from the dilemmas of seeking self-actualization in particular works that were supposed to manifest a self with a given particular nature. That attempt to validate one's natural original character in the "spiritual zoo" of particular individuals inevitably confronted consciousness with alien actualities. Here we have the removal of self-actualization from such particular natures and works operating on a world scale through an existing legal administration of property relations. The individuals of this legal condition relate to one another simply in terms of their body and whatever else they may legally make their own. All other particular considerations are a matter of indifference to one's legal recognition as a property owner. Here individuals, as persons, belong to a world that reflects what they are. This is their world, a world in which everything that counts is a matter of legal status as owner.

For this very reason, the power that presides over this world is otherwise completely unrestricted. It need not extend rights of political self-determination nor any specific family or social rights to its legal subjects. It need not give them bread and circuses. Yet, the lord of the world might choose to do so, as part of its unlimited prerogative to deal with what lies outside of property relations.

Further, the power presiding over the legal condition is not restricted to the given unity of a particular people. The status of person is indifferent to ethnicity or any other particular factor extraneous to the capacity of choice that makes possible participation in property relations. Consequently, the legal condition is in principle a world empire, with no intrinsic national limits.

The standpoint of consciousness within this legal condition falls within the general sphere of reason, carrying with it a certainty of the identity of

consciousness and self-consciousness. Consciousness is certain that its world is one in which it is at home, in which it finds its self reflected. This shape of consciousness further falls within the particular sphere of spirit even though it results from the destruction of natural ethical community. Spirit is at hand because the individuals of the legal condition know themselves to have a spiritual character, that is, a self that is realized in a lawful community where the I is a we and the we is an I. In this case the I has the form of personhood that is shared by all its members, who comprise the we of an abstractly universal legal empire.

Consciousness here knows itself to be a person in a world in which everyone treats one another as a person under the protection of a governing agency that lawfully upholds the regime of property relations. Can consciousness validate its certainty in this world? Does the global legal condition end up achieving what consciousness presumes that it does? Or does conscious experience an alienation, an inability to be at home in a world restricted to the formal universality of personhood?

Hegel observes how the latter scenario unfolds, leading to a new form of consciousness as spirit that is alienated from itself. To consider how and why this occurs, we must examine what consciousness experiences in the legal empire that has emerged from the workings of fate that natural ethical community inflicts upon itself. The legal condition of persons has made a matter of indifference the given particularities that were essential to natural ethical community and led to its intractable conflicts. The bonds of property relations are the universal fate of all in the empire of legality, restricting their recognition to the abstract universality of personhood. Each legal subject knows him- or herself to have an objectively realized identity that is common to all: that of property owner. This is a self whose character is independent of any particular natural givens and whose realization is found in factors that are “matters at hand” or examples of the “*Sache selbst*,” factors that have the kind of purified standing that arose out of the struggle to achieve self-actualization, where no particular work could do the job. Here the factor with regard to which these abstract selves have their recognized actuality for one another is property, whose specific content is completely contingent to its recognized embodiment of the will of its owner. Consequently, all particular content pertaining to individuals and their actualization is a matter of indifference to what they know their world to realize their essential being to be.

The other side to this condition is that the order that upholds personhood is a power external to the persons it contains. It lacks any further tie to them in terms of the particular differences that unify a natural ethical community. The legal order is not theirs because they belong to a certain people with a given ethnicity, customs or laws that pertain to matters beyond universal property relations. The empire lords over them as a global legal condition to which all are subject, irrespective of their particular national, kin, and indi-

vidual identities. The legal community that actualizes their abstract identity as property owners has no intrinsic particular boundary, but is an empire without limits.

As such, the legal order requires no particular involvement on the part of its members beyond respecting property and submitting to the authority of the supreme administrator of legality. Everything else about their predicament, everything else that involves a particular content is now arbitrary and at the arbitrary disposal of the power that presides over all.

Stoicism gave way to skepticism because of its inability to uphold self-consciousness in face of the abiding particulars that it sought to ignore. Skepticism tried to negate those abiding particulars by enlisting thought to actively dispute them. In so doing, however, skepticism revealed its own inability to free itself of its preoccupation with them. The empire of legality confronts consciousness with a somewhat analogous difficulty. Consciousness seeks to know itself in its lawful community such that the world is its self-actualization. The empire of property relations, however, leaves its members confronting the abiding particularity of themselves and their other relationships, as well as the arbitrariness of the lord to whom they are subject. On all these sides, they experience factors that are external and alien to the formal self-actualization that the regime of property relations provides. The legal condition is supposed to be the actualized category, securing the identity of consciousness and self-consciousness or of reason and objectivity, yet what consciousness confronts as the actualization of its personhood remains burdened by extraneous realities despite its global reach.

Personhood turns out to be the most impoverished of self-realizations, affording individuals the most abstract and empty status they can hold. As Hegel remarks at the very end of this section, to be considered *just* a person turns out to be a mark of contempt.<sup>17</sup> A person as merely a person can have no special worth, no distinguishing character that could be honored. To be a property owner and nothing else is to be alien to any specific household, social, or political involvements, as well as to any other cultural achievement.

Nonetheless, the legal condition ascribes validity solely to the person, securing recognition for it on a world scale to the exclusion of everything else. Once consciousness experiences the formality of this status, with its subjection to an accompanying surfeit of externalities, consciousness discovers that its condition is one of alienation, with nothing left to do but to surmount this predicament on its own initiative, through personal cultivation.

In paragraph 482, Hegel reflects on the impending transition, noting that earlier we observed the stoic self-sufficiency of abstract thought giving way to skepticism, which found its truth in the unhappy consciousness. The unhappy consciousness involved a bifurcation of self-consciousness into worldly and essential selves. Something similar is underway here, but in the more

concrete terms of reason and spirit. Consciousness has now experienced that its actuality as a person is just as much the loss of its determinate individual existence. It now faces the challenge of reaffirming its certainty of its spiritual essence in face of an alienating community.

Under the sway of a lord of the empire, individual consciousness finds that its own legal personality ends up being jeopardized by the power that is supposed to uphold the universal regime of property ownership. Just as the formal identity of personhood leaves out of account everything else that differentiates the individual, so the apex of the legal condition is occupied by a real individual whose concrete contingent agency cannot be eliminated without destroying its global dominion. In the absence of any mediating particular spheres with a countervailing validity of their own, the arbitrariness of the lord cannot be resisted by persons, whose restriction to the status of owner leaves them vulnerable to oppression by their common master. Their situation presents something like the stark alternatives facing the inhabitants of the legal order conjured up by social contract: either submit to the unchallenged authority of the sovereign (who, as Hobbes and Rousseau would say, can do no wrong) or retreat to one's own private judgment and individually revolt (as Locke suggests). Neither alternative can restore the certainty that reason is embodied in an existing spiritual essence.

Significantly, the alienation that afflicts the subjects of the legal order equally applies to the person who reigns supreme. That lord is a person like themselves, with the same formal status and burdened by the same externalities, albeit writ large. The license of the sovereign exhibits the same unrestrained destruction of particularities that skepticism wielded in thought. Like skeptical thinking, the arbitrariness of the lord of the world can never free itself of the abiding particularities it continually overrides.

In this world whose bonds of community have been reduced to relations of property, individuals face a power external to them, free to do as it wants so long as it upholds their formal recognition as persons. Since that recognition does not apply to what or how much one owns, or to any other association, the real existence of individuals is left hanging. The legal order in which that recognition is realized proves to be one in which the status of person is very much imperiled by the fact that all particular contents are subject to arbitrariness.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 445, p. 266.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 447–50, pp. 267–68.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 451, pp. 269–70.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 452, pp. 270–71.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 466–67, pp. 280–81.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 447, p. 267.



7. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, para. 161, pp. 200–201; para. 163, pp. 202–3.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 467, p. 275.
9. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke 14: Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 212.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 473, pp. 285–86.
11. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 74, 301, 511.
12. James Fishkin, *Justice, Equal Opportunity, and the Family* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 35–36, 49, 71, 145.
13. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 74, 301, 511.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 479, pp. 290–91.
15. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 481, pp. 292–93.
16. See Richard Dien Winfield, *Reason and Justice* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), *The Just Economy* (New York: Routledge, 1988), *Law and Civil Society* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1995), *The Just Family* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), and *The Just State* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2005).
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 480, p. 292.



## *Lecture 12*

# **Self-Alienated Spirit**

### PART 1

All sides of the empire of personhood have proven to be alienated from themselves. Just as stoicism remained plagued by the particularity of the given that could not be absorbed in its formal thinking and skepticism remained preoccupied with the particulars it sought to negate, so the ruler and every subject of the legal condition remain confronting particular factors that fall outside the global actualization of property relations. This situation undercuts the certainties of reason and spirit alike, for consciousness confronts a reality that is not reducible to the self-actualization it receives in the lawful community under which all persons fall. A world with no other unity than the legal enforcement of property relations by an arbitrary power external to persons has proven unable to make reason objective and give spiritual essence a universal realization.

Where then does the truth of reason and spirit reside for consciousness? Having experienced the untenability of natural ethical community and the empire of personhood, consciousness faces the challenge of finding its self-actualization as a member of a lawful community it knows to be alien to itself. Significantly, in paragraph 483 Hegel identifies the new shape of consciousness that arises from the empire of personhood as one of the alienation of *spirit* from itself. Consciousness cannot abandon the challenge of knowing itself as an I that is we and a we that is I. It has already experienced that unless consciousness has a universal spiritual rather than a particular natural essence, it cannot know its world to embody the category and be rational, which itself has proven to be necessary in light of the experiences of the shapes of mere consciousness and mere self-consciousness. How then must

consciousness proceed, given that it is a discrete individual confronting a law governed world external to it?

Consciousness still operates within the framework of spirit, so that the world that is alien to its inhabitants is nevertheless the work of their lawful activity. They are conscious of the alienating actuality they confront but they also have a “pure” consciousness that is aware of what should give them the self-actualization they lack. In bearing both awarenesses together, self-alienated spirit contains a bifurcation analogous to that of the unhappy consciousness. The unhappy consciousness was simultaneously conscious of its own living actuality and of a pure consciousness in unity with which it sought its true being. Here, by contrast, the bifurcation takes place within individuals who belong to a community in which they are estranged and are conscious of what they would have to do to overcome that estrangement.

The community or spiritual world in question is divided up into two different spheres. These are not the *oikos* and *polis* of natural ethical community, but an economy and a political arena, distinguished independently of given natural factors. Consciousness regards these arenas in terms of thought determinations of its pure consciousness, which is concerned with what it takes to be genuine spiritual essence. Accordingly, consciousness considers these spheres in respect to what is good and what is bad. Since these spheres are constituted by the activities of individuals, consciousness must also apply these categories of good and bad to its own conduct in these two domains. It will thereby view itself as either a noble, good consciousness or a base, bad consciousness.

In the course of doing this, consciousness will experience that all the categorizations it makes end up becoming inverted. What consciousness determines to be base will end up being good, whereas what it determines to be good will end up being base. Each sphere will take on the character of its counterpart.

Moreover, these inversions will occur in virtue of consciousness relating to its world in terms of cultivation or *Bildung*. This cultivation consists in individuals attempting to become at one with the world from which they are alienated by transforming or cultivating themselves. We will find consciousness discovering that this cultivating activity is such that consciousness cannot help but become alienated from it as well.

Let us begin at the very starting point of the shape of self-alienating spirit and examine how its world is structured and what exactly is the cultivation that consciousness here undertakes. In paragraph 486, Hegel observes that the world that issues from the experience of the empire of personhood is really split into two worlds. One is the actual world, the world of alienation itself, the world whose members find themselves estranged from what is given and engage in activities intended to overcome their alienation. On the other hand, there is the world that the members of this community construct

for themselves in “pure” consciousness, the ideal world in which they will find their genuine self-actualizations. These worlds are counterparts of one another and each participating individual in the self-alienation of spirit is aware of both worlds.

The pure consciousness is spoken of as faith. Nonetheless, Hegel maintains that we are not here dealing with religion proper. In the major section entitled “Religion” that will follow that entitled “Spirit,” consciousness as religion will be characterized as the self-consciousness of the absolute essence as it is in and for itself. This is not yet at hand. All faith here comprises is a belief in something that is a flight away from the actual world. In such faith, consciousness beholds something that it recognizes to be not in and for itself, but outside what it knows to be actual.

In paragraph 487, Hegel clarifies the character of the consciousness of self-alienated spirit by contrasting it with the shape of consciousness that immediately preceded it, that of the world of legality, of abstract right. Both shapes involve universality and self-consciousness. Both involve a knowing of oneself as universal and being present in the world one confronts. In the world of legality, individuals know themselves as having the universally recognized status of person. In the world of self-alienated spirit, individuals know themselves to have valid universality, but know that this is not something immediately actualized in their world. They do not take their own given nature to be universal and valid, nor do they take their existing community to provide them with their valid spiritual essence. Still, they know themselves to be in truth selves that are universal and they seek validation of this certainty.

Unlike persons in a world of legality, who have their abstract self actualized in the global regime of property relations, the members of the world of self-alienated spirit seek their truth in a universal actualization of their selves that is not given, but must be achieved through a process of actualization. This is a process whereby individuals themselves must overcome their own particularity, their own original natural character, and make themselves universal. Through cultivating themselves, they are to become completely at one with the world, which initially confronts them as something alien because what they are immediately in their own particular facticity is not ratified by this world. To become one with this world, they must make themselves universal, not in the empty formal sense of personhood, which leaves out everything particular, but in a concrete manner in which their particular activities acquire a universal character. Because, however, the universality in question is that of spiritual essence, the activity of their self-cultivation is precisely what upholds the order they confront. In this way, their cultivation is their universal self-actualization, for the process by which they make themselves universal is itself the existing reality of the world with which they seek identification.

Nonetheless, there is something inherently problematic about this whole endeavor. The whole rationale for engaging in cultivation is that consciousness confronts a world that is alien to it. That world already exists apart from the activity of cultivation in which consciousness is about to engage. How then can the activity of cultivation be that in which the world consists? The only way that the activity of cultivation can be at one with the actuality of the world is if the world is not really alienated from consciousness or alternately if the activity of cultivation is itself a sham that changes nothing about the individual's relation to the world.

This dilemma harks back to the situation of consciousness as reason that sought to make rational what is by transforming the given. Then the transformative activity of consciousness was directed upon something other than itself. That transformative activity only transpired so long as its goal was not achieved, because the achievement of its goal eliminated its own activity and its own reality. So long as its activity needed to be engaged in, it had not achieved what it sought out to do.

Here, in self-alienated spirit, the transformative activity of consciousness is directed upon itself in a community with which consciousness aims to unite through its self-cultivation. That community is such that its members cannot immediately be conscious of themselves. It has something alien about it. Nonetheless, the community still has an essential character with respect to which genuine self-consciousness is to be found. Consciousness must cultivate itself to be true to itself, for only through cultivation can consciousness be at home in the community.

To cultivate themselves, to be true to themselves, and to be conscious of being what they truly are, individuals have to overcome what is their natural character. Admittedly, to do so they must use their natural talents and abilities. These may present, as Hegel observes, quantitative implications for how they can perform, but these natural endowments cannot qualitatively determine cultivation because nothing in the given nature of the individual can count as valid.<sup>1</sup> True self-consciousness can only lie in what is produced by making oneself universal, by cultivating oneself. Nonetheless, since the world with which consciousness seeks unity is the world to which it belongs, cultivation is the activity that this world imposes upon its members, while equally being the activity in which the whole institutional framework consists.

Consequently, cultivation does not bring into a being a new world order. Rather, consciousness, in cultivating itself, makes itself one with what is at hand. Moreover, what is at hand consists in precisely the activities that its members engage in in cultivating themselves. That is how their engagement in cultivation, in overcoming their own natural givenness by taking on universal activity, is connected with the essential character of the world in which they find themselves. Strangely enough, the institutions of the world of self-

alienated spirit consist in what its alienated members do to cultivate themselves and remove their alienation. As a result, consciousness will find itself alienated from its own activity of cultivation insofar as the latter comprises the world from which it is alienated to being with.

This scenario proceeds in general terms that do not directly bring into play the division of economic and politic spheres that Hegel invokes. Cultivation, in the first instance, simply signifies a making universal of one's activity in a community from which one is alienated, but with which one seeks unification. The inversion of the significance of consciousness's own activity seems to proceed without need of bringing in any further differentiation of economic and political spheres. The only contrast that seems immediately at hand is that between the particular natural character of individuals and the universality they seek to obtain through cultivation.

Nonetheless, Hegel situates the activities of cultivation in respect to two institutional domains and we need to examine why these should enter in and have the character he ascribes to them. On the one hand, he observes there to be a political sphere and on the other hand an economic sphere and in face of this differentiation, cultivation consists in acquiring the universal forms of activity that participation in these spheres requires. With respect to the political sphere, we encounter no real institutional demarcation between officeholders and non-officeholders, let alone any division of powers of the government. Instead, state power has no identifiable subjectivity occupying it, but rather comprises simply the activities of those who are engaging in political cultivation. This amounts to undertaking the employment by which one gives one's service to the state. Similarly, with regard to the economy, the realm of wealth, what lies at hand is simply the ongoing interaction wherein individuals cultivate themselves by obtaining and exercising the universal skills and needs they must employ to participate in market activity. In both cases, the cultivation is achieved through practicing the universal modalities of activity specific to each arena. In that way, the cultivation coincides with the operations of these institutions.

Participation in these two spheres is supposed to unite the individual with a world actualizing its universal self, yet it still has something from which the individual is initially separate. This is reflected in how, as Hegel remarks, the individual can choose not to engage in these activities. That is possible because, as alienated, one is not in any immediate unity with these spheres. One may decide not to participate in either, although one then does not achieve the actualizations they provide. Instead, one remains an uncultivated individual with no real standing in the world.

Cultivation thus depends on the initiative of the individual and proceeds in a twofold manner. One cultivates oneself so as to achieve one's true self-actualization, but doing so is predicated upon one's alienation from the world, without which cultivation would be unnecessary. One's true original

nature is thus the alienation of one's natural being. Cultivation and alienation are two sides of the same coin. Indeed, their interdependence is precisely why cultivation can never free itself of alienation.

In cultivation the individual makes itself into what it is in itself and only by doing so does it have actual existence as it is in itself. Although this seems reminiscent of how individuals sought to become what they originally are in the "spiritual zoo," there self-actualization did not involve taking one's place in one's community. The "spiritual zoo" instead involved the conflict of different individuals trying to actualize in their activity what they are by nature. Here, in self-alienated spirit, the self-actualization of cultivation consists in the overcoming of the natural self. Cultivation reduces one's original particular nature to an inessential distinction, which at most may distinguish the magnitude but not the quality of one's efforts. There can be no talk of individuals being good or bad by nature when self-validation resides in cultivation. What one is by nature is here in principle incapable of providing the true determination of the self, which objectivity should reflect and which one's community should universally realize. Instead, one gains one's true actuality by taking on the universal character exhibited in the activities animating the existing institutional spheres of one's community. That community is not a natural ethical community, to which individuals belonged by being part of a given people and by having certain natural differences that allotted them certain roles. The community comprised of self-cultivated, self-alienated individuals, cannot be structured in the natural terms that defined natural ethical community and subjected it to a self-destructive fate. What distinguishes the spheres of the community of cultivation are modes of activity that can be specified apart from any natural differentia. In other words, the spheres of this community are differentiated by "spiritual" features. The political arena is defined by the universality of its aims, which always involve ordering the whole body politic, whereas the economic arena is defined by the particularity of its pursuits, which concern the satisfaction of self-selected needs for the commodities of others. Because the needs at play in the economy are determined by choice rather than natural necessity, they are conventional or "spiritual" in character, just as are the earning activities that must be engaged in to satisfy them.

This is in stark contrast to the activities undertaken by individuals of the "spiritual zoo," who made manifesting their particular natural character the content of their activity. As Hegel observes in paragraph 488, such activities are not valid in the framework of self-alienated spirit, where what counts is universal and not immediately given.

Although talk of good and bad cannot be applied to what is given by nature, these terms do now enter in with regards to the activities of cultivation in the two conventional, "spiritual" spheres of the economy and the state. Good and bad comes into play as the evaluative norms of the pure



consciousness of the participants in the world of self-alienated spirit. As Hegel observes in paragraph 490, these terms are the thoughts of what is taken to be of essential as opposed to inessential significance.

Hegel describes the good as here signifying the unchanging essence of all consciousness, the independent spiritual power of what is in-itself. As such, the good does not contain the movement of consciousness existing for itself, leaving the latter something merely incidental. By contrast, the bad is characterized as the passive spiritual essence of the universal insofar as it relinquishes itself and permits individuals to get in it their consciousness of their individuality. So whereas the good involves the universal essence, which lacks individuality, the bad is that in which individuality triumphs over the universal.

These characterizations take for granted the separation of the universal and the individual. In both the good and the bad, the universal and individual are estranged from one another. That estrangement was of course anticipated in the condition of global legality, whose formal universality does not integrate itself with any specific individual content. Precisely because of that, this empire of law confronted its members with a world in which the individuality with which actuality is tied up became alien to their universality.

Insofar as self-alienated spirit arises from the experience of that predicament, what it takes to be the good is a universality that is not intrinsically connected to individuality, whereas what it takes to be bad involves a triumph of individuality at the expense of universality. The awareness of such good and bad is the faith of the pure consciousness of individuals that accompanies their cultivation in the two spheres of economy and politics. In those spheres, their cultivated engagements are both universal, yet directed at ends that are particular and universal respectively.

Consciousness as self-alienated spirit thus has a divided awareness. On the one hand, the individual is conscious of the good and bad, which motivates its efforts at cultivated self-actualization. On the other hand, the individual is conscious of the world in which it finds itself and of its own involvements therein. How should it act in this world to validate its certainty that cultivation will secure the truth of reason and spirit? The conditions of its situation put it in a position where it must judge its engagements in light of its construal of good and bad.

What motivates cultivation as that by which the self can become conscious of itself as in accord with objectivity and spiritual essence? It is the certainty that consciousness's own given individuality is inessential and must be negated to obtain the universality required to be at one with its world. The thoughts of good and bad are drawn on the basis of this certainty and provide the criteria to which consciousness must appeal to validate its cultivation. Let us observe how consciousness's self-examination now unfolds.

## PART 2

Throughout all the shapes of consciousness as spirit, self-consciousness has come to regard what it confronts as being fundamentally at one with it in virtue of belonging to a community whose relationships comprise a world that provide everyone's common self-actualization. In natural ethical community, the universality of the self was tied to natural differences that proved to be untenable vehicles of unity. In the legal world, the universality of the self consisted in the status of person, which left out everything else that was particular. Here, with self-alienated spirit, the universality of the self consists in cultivation. This is a universality that consciousness gives itself through its own activity of self-transformation. This cultivation is not a merely personal formation. Rather it consists in cultivating activities whereby the individual participates in two alternate spheres of community, politics and the economy.

One must examine what is the due character of these two spheres that emerges from the experience of the legal empire, rather than from extraneous assumptions. They should be defined in terms that are endemic to the cultivation of self-alienated spirit. As Hegel points out, the universal selfhood that cultivation affirms is not the person of the legal order.<sup>2</sup> It is not a formal status that depends upon the external enforcement of a lord of the empire and which leaves untouched the given particularity and particular engagements of individuals. Cultivation is a personal initiative and the institutional spheres to which it is connected must be such as to accommodate it.

Why then does cultivation involve two modalities that comprise the workings of political power, *Staatsmacht*, and of the economy, the realm of wealth, of *Reichtum*? Of course, it might be that Hegel has introduced contents that are illustrative rather than constitutive. The details he provides can well be associated with the historical period after the fall of Rome, with the rise of markets and of a certain kind of early modern political order in Christendom, leading to absolute monarchy.

To stick to the strictures of pure observation, however, we must focus solely on what the shape of consciousness brings with it. The good and the bad are fittingly characterized in terms of an essential universality that lacks the element of individuality, where the individual for itself opposes what it regards as essential or in itself. This construal is rooted in the dynamic of cultivation, where consciousness seeks to subordinate its given individuality to the universal so as to achieve a self-actualization that encompasses objectivity as part of a we that is I and an I that is we.

On the other hand, the initial consideration of alienation and cultivation involves reference to the world without breaking it up in any determinate fashion. All the prior shape of consciousness left was an external power that secured the self a formal universality alien to everything particular. To overcome this alienation and secure the identity of reason and spirit, conscious-

ness faces the task of overcoming the particularity that does not conform to what is universal and do this as a cultivation that is itself at one with the activities of everyone else in a community consisting in their respective activities of cultivation. Particularity and universality are both at hand in separation from one another at the same time that the workings of the whole are to consist in cultivations removing their disparity. This involves two converse engagements that define the two spheres of the economy and state as they figure as arenas for realizing cultivation. Namely, the particular aims of economic activity are to be made universal through the market engagements of individuals who must form their needs and production in accord with universal market demand to participate in the economy. Alternately, the universal aims of government cannot be realized unless individuals contribute their particular service to the state in a way that satisfies general political requirements.

The characterization of state power in paragraph 493 gives us the basic features that should be at stake. First of all, the state is a simple substance, self-subsistent and not differentiated in any way. It must have this simplicity insofar as it opposes individuals as something that is alien to their given existence and cannot include the particular difference they embody. Second, the state is a universal work, something all its members produce through their cultivated activity. As such, the state is the absolute thing that matters. Earlier we saw the thing that mattered, the *Sache selbst*, as an individual yet purely determinable factor that individuals separately produced in a plurality of individual products so as to obtain each a self-actualization that was no longer undermined by the particularity of its works. This purified product was not yet a work of spirit, both containing the activity of its production as well as comprising a self-subsistent community in which all its members find their common self-actualization. Now, however, the state has this purified character writ large, having eliminated the given particular limits of natural ethical community. The political sphere is the common, universal work of all individuals, the absolute thing that matters in which they all have their universal actuality. It is that in which they can recognize themselves as having a cultivated, non-natural, spiritual being that is universally realized. As Hegel observes, the state is here that in which individuals find their essence and have the consciousness of their universality.<sup>3</sup> Although individuals are engaged in particular activities serving the state, their activities are all on a par in that they all have the same work as their product and are all recognized to do so. Admittedly, to some degree this general involvement and recognition applies equally to natural ethical community, whose members all follow its given law and thereby reproduce the bonds of community to which they belong. There, too, the substantial community was the common work of all who participated in its life. They could be conscious of themselves as universal, because they are all engaged in the lawful activity sustaining their com-

munity. That community, however, was not an absolute *Sache selbst*, however, for it had given particular contents essential to its unity, which were tied to the given nature of individuals. That is no longer the case in the world of alienation and cultivation.

Symptomatic of how the state is much more than a mere product is something that Hegel adds to the description of the state. He observes that because the state is here an absolute *Sache selbst*, the work and simple result of all the political service of its members, the fact that it emerges from their own activities itself disappears.<sup>4</sup> The state instead shows itself to be the absolute foundation and subsistence of all their cultivated acts. After all, if the state were not already at hand, individuals could not cultivate themselves so as to serve it. The same can be said of the economy, which individuals cannot cultivate themselves to enter if it did not face them as a preexisting market.

In both cases of cultivation, individuals are not engaging in activities that bring into being something that did not exist already. Instead, they mold themselves to join in an existing set of institutions that are renewed in the work of all. Nonetheless, each such sphere is something to which individuals belong not in virtue of what they are immediately but in virtue of a cultivation whereby they surmount what they are by nature.

In observing the involvement of cultivated individuals in the political sphere, we find no mention of what is distinctly individual about the participants. They are engaged in a common work, which is itself not differentiated in any way that would relate it to something particular about them.

The sphere of wealth also counts as a universal spiritual essence. This signifies that its participants relate to one another such that they realize themselves in a recognized universal manner that comprises the actuality of that form of community. Like the political arena, the economy relates its members through a cultivated form of activity that is not tied to any particular character they may have. All that is required to participate in the economy is cultivating oneself to meet the universal condition of having a need for what others have to offer in return for what one can furnish. On these terms, individuals realize themselves in a recognized way, conscious of having an actuality that is universal.

Both of these spheres are only spheres of cultivation to the extent that they have some universality. Since cultivation consists in taking on a universal mode of activity, the spheres of cultivation must be such that one can only participate in them by cultivating oneself so as to act in a universal way. In each case, the arena of cultivation is equally the work and the activity of all. This is true of wealth as much as political power. Wealth as a whole, or the economy, is the product of everyone who participates in market activity.

Nonetheless, the participants in the economy enter its universal network of commodity relations for the sake of satisfying their own particular needs.

Admittedly, they are doing so through an institution in which one can only satisfy one's economic needs by enabling others to do the same. They must therefore train themselves to have a marketable skill and value. Still, what distinguishes the economy from the state is that economic agents participate for the sake of their own interest, whereas citizens serve the universal interest of the body politic. The whole universal network of economic provisioning is subordinate to their own self-seeking, to the satisfaction of their own need for commodities, for what others have to offer in exchange for something that will satisfy their needs in return. The participants here have an actuality that is in itself universal, but they engage in this process for the sake of their own individual consumption, their own individual satisfaction, or, one could say, their own self-interest.

Unlike natural ethical community, where individuals could be segregated into different spheres by natural differences, the individuals of alienated spirit populate both the economic and the political spheres. Just as they have a divided awareness, conscious of the good and the bad and conscious of the actual spheres of their world, they equally participate in two types of cultivated activities, one in the economy and the other in service to the state.

These two modalities of cultivated activity operate in inverse ways. Political service produces a work that is universal and essential and subordinates individual interests to its common good. By contrast, economic activity takes on universal forms, but does so for the sake of the particular interests of the participating individuals. Accordingly, these engagements involve different types of self-actualization in which the individual sees different aspects of itself realized in each sphere. In the political sphere, the individual encounters its own essential being, the in-itself, the properly universal self that has overcome its given particularity. In the economic sphere it encounters its own singular individuality, from which others are distinguished.

At the same time that the individual apprehends its actual realizations in these two spheres, it also has the pure consciousness of the good and the bad, which motivates its self-cultivations. As Hegel points out, consciousness here not only involves both of these awarenesses, but is conscious of them in their relation to one another.<sup>5</sup> Just as the unhappy consciousness was aware of the relation between its finite awareness and the essential consciousness with which it sought unification, so here the consciousness of alienated spirit relates its pure consciousness to its actual consciousness, applying what it renders in thought to what it finds objective. In other words, consciousness here essentially judges how the categories of good and bad apply to its dual cultivated activities. Consciousness now applies its pure thoughts or faith in what is good and bad to its own self-actualizations.

To begin with, it seems clear that the thought of the good will be ascribed to the sphere of state power and the thought of the bad will be ascribed to the sphere of wealth. After all, service to the state subordinates individuality to

the universal end of political association, privileging the universal like the good, whereas economic activity subordinates the universal network of the market to the satisfaction of the particular interests of individual commodity owners, privileging individuality like the bad.

Each of these judgments, however, turns out to be defective because they both operate on the basis of a separation of the individual and the universal. This separation renders each judgment one-sided and ultimately at odds with the unity of reason and spiritual essence. Spiritual essence, the I that is we and the we that is I, unites the universal and the individual, as well as self-consciousness and consciousness. In spiritual essence, each conscious individual is aware of belonging to a community in which what it confronts is a realization of itself as an individual at one with others. Its universality does not override its individuality nor does its individuality subordinate its universality. Both aspects go hand and hand without violence to either. Here, however, in the judgments of self-alienated spirit, universality and individuality are judged as if they were fundamentally separate and opposed.

As paragraph 495 observes, the good is applied as that in which self-consciousness truly finds itself, as that objective reality which is genuinely at one with self-consciousness. The bad, by contrast, is applied as that objectivity which self-consciousness finds opposing itself. The bad consists in the disparity between objective reality and self-consciousness. The relation to self-consciousness is determinative of the good and bad because within the framework of consciousness as spirit, what is true is presumed to be the form of community in which self-consciousness finds itself actualized. That truth is a practical task for self-alienated spirit because it is aware of the discrepancy between what the individual is immediately and how it needs to cultivate itself to become at one with its genuine self-actualization in the world of others. What is good is what realizes that unification and eliminates what is alien, whereas what is bad is what retains the discrepancy by retaining the one-sided attachment to an individuality that opposes universality.

These contrasts are also rooted more generally in the underlying certainty of consciousness as reason. That certainty presumes an underlying unity between self-consciousness and consciousness, or, alternately stated, presumes that what really is in-itself is the category. This is the certainty in the inherent rationality of what is objective, the certainty that objectivity is at one with self-consciousness, leaving self-consciousness confronting something from which it is not alienated, something in which it finds itself as reason, laying hold of what is objective.

For a consciousness still mired in alienation, good and bad are therefore opposing relationships to self-consciousness, where the objectivity in accord with self-consciousness is good and that in opposition is bad. On both accounts, these categorizations are prescriptive. That is, they apply to conditions that are not inherently necessary. They pertain to what should be, but is

not objectively guaranteed. That prescriptively normative character is symptomatic of their deficiently one-sided character.

The judgments about political and economic activities exhibit their own inadequacy as soon as consciousness seeks to validate its respective cultivations. In judging that service to the state is good, consciousness relied upon how the state exhibits the dimension of universality or what is here regarded as in-itself without affirming what is for consciousness its own individuality. As Hegel puts it in paragraph 496, in state power consciousness finds its simple essence and subsistence, but not its individuality as such. It finds its being-in-itself but not its being-for-self. This is manifest in how service to the state involves an obedience to political power requiring the subjugation of individual interest and activity in its behalf. Failure to be obedient would be tantamount to political corruption, where the individual uses the state for personal enrichment, subordinating politics to the satisfaction of self-interest. The cultivation required by state service only produces the body politic as a common work through obedience at the expense of one's individual pursuits.

If, however, the good is really to involve the correspondence of self-consciousness with objectivity, and self-consciousness is not just universal but also individual, then there is a yawning disparity in the political sphere that undercuts any ascription of good to it. The state lacks the element of individuality and therefore turns out to deserve being judged to be bad.

Consciousness's initial judgment about the sphere of wealth fares no better. The economy had been characterized as bad in that it seems to subordinate its common universal work to the satisfaction of particular needs. It turns out, however, that the cultivated activity of individuals in the market actually realizes the universal network of commodity relations, with the lawful order of its "invisible hand." The all-sided activity of individuals pursuing their own satisfaction ends up satisfying everyone who participates. It ends up providing for all who engage in its economic affairs. Admittedly, as Hegel points out, the economy has contingency built into it, such that not everyone's need necessarily gets satisfied.<sup>6</sup> One may find oneself unemployed or otherwise unable to obtain the commodities one needs, but that predicament is conditioned by accidents that may not occur. There is nothing about the market that guarantees that one will succeed or fail to fulfill one's economic interest. Whatever the outcome, however, economic activity always retains its universal character, providing the opportunity for all to engage and sustain themselves in face of the contingencies of the market place. The sphere of wealth is this thousand-handed benefactor, even if it may turn out that one needs the thousand-and-one hand that is not extended. Nevertheless, the economy remains the universal benefactor on which the satisfaction of everyone's needs for commodities depends. Instead of being bad, the sphere of wealth turns out to be good.

In both spheres of the actuality of its cultivation, consciousness experiences parity and disparity with its pure notions of good and bad. As paragraph 497 observes, when consciousness focuses on the essential universality of its common work, the state appears to be good and the economy appears to be bad, but when consciousness focuses on the factor of individuality, it finds the state lacking and the economy sufficient. Both factors should be joined, but each sphere alternately realizes one at the expense of the other.

Consciousness has discovered that it can find both state power and the sphere of wealth in parity or disparity with the pure standard motivating its cultivations. As paragraph 498 delineates, the uncovering of the parity or disparity of the different spheres equally uncovers an inversion in how consciousness must regard the different shapes that it takes in the two forms of cultivation with which it engages in the state and the economy. Consciousness finds that it can regard itself and others as being good or bad in line with how it evaluates the two spheres in which the two forms of cultivation unfold. The institutions of the state and the economy consist in nothing but the cultivated activities of individuals, so insofar as consciousness finds those institutions to be good or bad, it must equally find itself and others noble or base. The noble consciousness is that which is judged to be good, whereas the base consciousness is that which is judged to be bad and consciousness experiences that the distinction between these types cannot be upheld.

Insofar as state power and the economy are judged to be good, individuals count as good insofar as they are in equality or in parity with the state or the realm of wealth and, alternately, they count as base-minded when they are in disparity with either sphere. On the other hand, insofar as state power and the sphere of wealth are judged to be bad, individuals are bad if they are in parity and good if they are in disparity with those institutions.

Consequently, the distinction between the noble mind and the base mind is subject to the same inversions to which the judgments of state and economy are subject. Depending upon which separated factor is highlighted, universality or individuality, consciousness takes on a different cast. What is noble is equally base and what is base is equally noble. This result follows inexorably from the gap between individual and universal that is the starting point of self-alienated spirit and its cultivation.

Nonetheless, there is a connection between the outer and inner dimensions of the individual's involvements. To be noble minded in regard to state power, the individual begins by being obedient and in so doing judges itself to be noble-minded. So in judging oneself to be noble-minded, one is obedient and enjoys a kind of inner respect. Similarly, in the sphere of wealth, when one regards oneself or others as acting in conformity with the universal workings of the economy, one respects and honors those who so conform.

Conversely, when one clings to the disparity between oneself and these spheres, the opposite ensues. With regard to state power, one feels politically



oppressed, one detests the ruler, and in paying outer obedience, one serves with concealed malice and a readiness to revolt. Similarly, one may participate in the economy to satisfy one's needs, but with contempt for its base adherence to the pursuit of wealth. One despises its universal working as something devoid of value and equally detests one's own involvement. Consciousness can follow either path and in the end consciousness finds that it has no ground for keeping good and bad apart or noble-minded and base-minded apart. Any line drawn between them evaporates under scrutiny.

Still, in paragraph 502, Hegel describes a variation on being noble-minded that might seem more resilient. He characterizes it in terms of the heroism of service. This heroic service involves expressly sacrificing one's particular existence for the sake of the universal. When virtue contended with the way of the world, consciousness also sacrificed its particular purposes for the sake of the universal, but there consciousness neither sacrificed its life, nor was a member of an existing community with political and economic spheres with which it sought unification through cultivation. Rather, consciousness there pursued virtue so as to alter the way of the world, to alter the character of existing institutions. That pursuit of virtue was not what one did as part of an existing world in order to be at one with it. Rather, the knight of virtue sought to alter the way of the world. Here something very different is going on, where one operates as one participant among others within existing institutions in which one seeks one's self-actualization through cultivation. In this context, the heroism of service turns out to be problematic, for the sacrifice of one's entire existence cannot provide the enduring self-actualization at which cultivation aims.

Significantly, the terms of cultivation are such that the actuality of the two spheres of state power and wealth does not include any determinate agency apart from that of the individuals who cultivate themselves. The economy has no ruling agency distinct from the particular interdependent self-seeking of its participants and no real mention is made of the state having a particular will. It is instead a simple lawful order to which everyone is seeking to conform in the obedient service of political cultivation.

As Hegel observes, state power is not yet government in any further determinate sense.<sup>7</sup> Consequently obedience is an abstract service, negatively defined in terms of overcoming one's given particularity, but devoid of further positive particular content. At this juncture, language comes into play. Although Hegel observes that obedience could take the form of silent service, he acknowledges that language is a particularly appropriate vehicle for political cultivation.<sup>8</sup> Language is inherently universal and expressing obedience to state power in language is an appropriately universal way of serving a political domain whose absolute standing is otherwise undifferentiated. As Hegel notes, beginning in paragraph 508, language is not just universal, but a medium in which the individual comes forward in a universal

manner in relation to other individuals. Language contains the I in its rational purity, expressing a self that is both individual and universal. In language, individuality comes into an existence that is both for itself and equally for others. As Hegel observes in paragraph 508, language appears to be a middle term, a mediating factor that bridges the gap between individual and universal that remains when service to the state subordinates the individual to the universal or when the economy subordinates the universal to individual self-interest. Consciousness, having experienced the problematic character of its political and economic cultivations, is ready to turn to language to achieve the resolution that has so far eluded its efforts to cultivate itself. Consciousness has found itself remaining estranged from the political and economic spheres insofar as the work of politics leaves out its individuality whereas the pursuit of wealth leaves the universal subordinate to the individual.

Now, as paragraph 509 begins observing, consciousness embarks on using language as its vehicle of cultivation to overcome these oppositions and the instability of its judgments of good and bad and of noble and base selves. To the alienated consciousness, state power comprises an abstract universal, whose simple absolute power offers no determinate guide for how the individual will is to make a sufficiently obedient response. This is reflected in the bifurcation that may be lurking within the noble consciousness, which offers obedience but has hidden within itself its own individual interests lying in anguish. Language, however, offers consciousness an instrument that, at least in the abstract, actualizes the unity of universal and individual. The question is, however, what kind of language is to serve the specific challenge of cultivation?

What language is here called upon to achieve is to bring the individual into unity with the state power. As paragraph 510 observes, this is precisely what language accomplishes in the most literal sense. Namely, consciousness uses language so as to enable the state power to take the form of an individual whose absolute authority is conferred through universal recognition in speech. The speech in question is a heroism of flattery, as opposed to the heroism of silent service. Individuals express their obedience to an individual whose sovereign authority they acknowledge by exclusively directing to that individual a supreme flattery. Their common language of flattery allows their own individuality to animate a universal activity that transforms state power into an absolute monarchy, where the universality of politics is wedded to an individual. Only their common recognition, which has its appropriate expression in the verbal obedience of flattery, can secure the actual authority of state power. Whereas silent obedience leaves that authority only implicit, the verbal obedience of flattery gives that authority explicit recognition. Flattery is the cultivated self-actualization of the flatterers, which enables state power to be conscious of itself as an individual. This obsequious speech does not flatter the state in general but is specifically addressed to an individual,

whose identity with state power depends upon the universal recognition that general flattery actualizes. In conjoining their own individuality to the universality of flattering speech, individuals relate to state power in a manner that conjoins its universal significance with something individual. That is, they obey someone they name insofar as in naming that individual as the embodiment of state power they submit to and realize its authority.

Only in being given a royal name to which all direct their flattery can an individual gain the stature of unlimited monarch by which state power gains an individual embodiment. It is precisely in virtue of being called “King John” or the like by everyone that the designated individual *is* the absolute monarch. If instead one just referred to the image of the individual and that person’s natural givenness there would be no conjoining of the universality of the state with individuality.

This verbal obedience that names the sovereign is different from obedience to the law, for it involves designating an individual and expressing obedience to that figure as the exclusive and absolute embodiment of sovereign power. Nonetheless, the employment of language to join the universality of the state to an individual appears to solve at least part of the problem of alienation that cultivation aims to overcome, for individuals now confront a political power that is both universally authoritative and singularly individual.

Hegel, however, observes that the resultant monarch is left alienated from him- or herself.<sup>9</sup> The monarch cannot be self-conscious in the obedient flattery of others. As paragraph 511 notes, insofar as the sphere of the state power has its actuality in the sacrifices of the noble consciousness, its own substance is self-alienated as well. Just as the master could not be conscious of him- or herself in the servile consciousness of its servant, so the monarch does not encounter its own absolute universal individuality in the verbal self-sacrifice of its cultivated flatters. Instead, the sovereign finds itself only in its own individuality, to which the universality of the state is subordinated. In other words, in the monarch, the state exists just as wealth does, as a universal work subordinate to the singular individual. Through the flattery that names the sovereign, the state takes a form that is identical to what consciousness understands wealth to be. It is a spiritual essence, a we that is I and an I that is we, that is sacrificed to an individual. In attaining individuality, the state has subordinated its universality to the arbitrariness of a singular will, external to that of all other cultivated individuals. As Hegel observes, all that remains of any universality is the otherwise empty name that flattery repeatedly utters.<sup>10</sup>

The employment of language to conjoin universality and individuality in the state has ended up making political power subordinate to individuality in the same way in which the economy subordinates the universal interdependence of market activity to the individual. Consciousness therein experiences

an inversion completely analogous to those that afflicted all the judgments distinguishing good and bad or noble and base. Whether obeying in silence or in speech, consciousness ends up unable to distinguish noble from base or good from bad. What the noble consciousness ends up doing with regard to the relation of universal and individual is no different from what is accomplished by the base consciousness. The experience of this outcome leaves consciousness the task of articulating the resultant truth, which it will do under the rubric of “pure insight.”

### PART 3

Through all the above inversions, the very distinction between wealth and power has become questionable for consciousness, as have the related distinctions between good and bad and between noble and base consciousness. Paragraph 519 introduces the shape of consciousness that takes into account all of what has been experienced, recognizing the all-sided collapse of the distinctions that pervade self-alienated spirit and its whole enterprise of cultivation. The truth of this whole sphere has turned out to consist in what can alone give expression to these inversions—a language of disruption that exposes the untenability of all the oppositions with which cultivation contends.

Hegel characterizes this language of disruption as a pure cultivation, consisting in an absolute universal inversion and alienation of thought and actuality.<sup>11</sup> It operates both in thought and actuality, comprising the real intervention adopted by the individual that remains confined within a discourse directed at the cultivated activities and institutions it addresses. This intervention in speech is the culmination of cultivation because it is a cultivation that has become conscious of what cultivation is really all about. In partaking in the language of disruption, which gives expression to the dissolution of all distinctions between good and bad and noble and base standpoints, consciousness makes itself the living embodiment of the world from which it is alienated. Consciousness’s inverting, self-canceling talk draws and then just as soon tears down distinctions in how alienated self-consciousness relates to actuality. It does in speech what it experiences the world of cultivation to be in truth.

What, however, does consciousness actually accomplish by speaking in a way that exhibits the inversion of all the distinctions that are drawn in its efforts at cultivation? The language of disruption is the public activity that consciousness here adopts to be true to itself and have an actuality that is no longer alienated. Consciousness is not engaging in a private activity, but is operating in the universal dimension of language, engaging in the witty repartee that debunks both spheres of its world and all the distinctions that are

part and parcel of its functioning. Consciousness intends this engagement to make it one with its world, for what this world is is supposed to be what consciousness's disruptive speech mirrors in its own discursive activity.

This disrupting speech is not an exercise in skepticism, which directs its negative fury at undermining all particular content to validate its certainty that the empty universal form of abstract thought is what is essential. Rather, its disruptive repartee aims to exhibit a truth that is the way of its economic and political world. Moving from one position to another, from one idea to another, from one distinction to its opposite, consciousness here unmasks its world for what it is and becomes that world in speech.

Has consciousness thereby given itself an actualization that overcomes alienation and signals the triumph of the cultivation whose very forms it skewers? Has consciousness attained a pure insight into the workings of its world by becoming the essence of that world?

The pure insight to which consciousness gives expression is tied to a certain kind of belief or faith. Throughout the endeavors of consciousness to cultivate itself and overcome its alienation, there has been a discrepancy between the individuality and the universality of what was taken to be essential. All the different kinds of good and bad were defined in terms of these oppositions. The oppositions, however, have shown themselves to not really be stable. They cannot be held apart. This truth is given an individual positive expression in the public pronouncements of the debunking individual.

Hegel identifies pure insight as the self-consciousness that does know everything to just be the self and the self to be everything.<sup>12</sup> Disruptive speech has destroyed, at least in public discourse, any substantiality that might still appear to be opposed to the self. It has paved the way for such pure insight to seek its validation. That quest will lead to what Hegel will identify as the shape of consciousness of the Enlightenment, which will then result in the reign of what Hegel calls absolute freedom and terror.

Hegel entitles the second section of self-alienated spirit "Faith and pure insight," and this section stands in a somewhat confusing relation to the shape of consciousness that follows, which Hegel identifies with the standpoint of the Enlightenment. What is perplexing, at least at first glance, is that "Faith and pure insight" seems to present the same conflict that drives the shape of Enlightenment to its truth. The consciousness of the Enlightenment thus appears to replay several times over the oppositions that are already unfolded in the preceding section.

To clarify matters, it is important to look back at how the shape of faith and pure insight arises and to try to follow how it supplies the experience from which the shape of the Enlightenment emerges. Hegel presents faith and pure insight as resulting from the disrupted consciousness that gives expression in language to the inversions of all the distinctions that drive the cultivation with which individuals attempt to overcome their alienation and

achieve unity with the world they share with others.<sup>13</sup> The disrupted consciousness exposes in speech how no matter what cultivated activity individuals employ, they end up just as much conforming as not conforming to the essence of their world. Whether they attempt to be noble, honest individuals who cultivate themselves to join in the universal workings of political power and wealth, or they take the opposite course and oppose these arenas, each actualization proves to be both compatible and not compatible with the self.

The very articulation of this situation is what provides the prelude to the emergence of faith and pure insight. These two correlative standpoints emerge from the disruptive consciousness that points out how all the various distinctions in the process of cultivation end up inverting themselves, end up having their validity eliminated.

The experience of doing this presents us, on Hegel's account, with a consciousness that bifurcates itself into these two opposing shapes of faith and pure insight, which end up sharing very much in common. Their conflict is going to be marked by a failure on the part of both antagonists to recognize their commonality. They will do so by focusing on one aspect to the exclusion of the other aspect that together define their reality.

Our first task as phenomenological observers is to see how these forms arise and why there are two of them with the opposing character distinguishing faith from pure insight. In paragraph 526, Hegel begins by pointing out how the whole world of cultivation has become alienated from itself. The activities that were intended to establish reconciliation through cultivation have turned out to leave individuals confronting something that remains alien to them. The disrupted consciousness brings this home in the most radical way by duplicating in its own speech the alienating predicament it exposes in its ceaseless, self-inverting babble. This outcome points consciousness beyond the alien actuality within and without itself to seek its self-actualization in another domain, the "unreal world of *pure consciousness*, or of *thought*."<sup>14</sup> The recourse to thought is the true result of the disrupted consciousness for it experiences how the world as well as its own activities in the world involve differences that are no differences. This differentiation that involves no true otherness is precisely the kind of inner distinguishing that Hegel identifies with the concept, as well as self-consciousness, both of which have this kind of inner differentiation. As we have observed, the concept, the universal as such, is intrinsically differentiated or self-particularizing, for otherwise it lacks its constitutive unity as a commonality that is necessarily connected to the differentiated particulars that fall under it. Similarly, self-consciousness distinguishes itself from itself as its own object, yet maintains its self-identity.

Accordingly, the experience of the disruptive consciousness engenders a new shape of consciousness that seeks its self-actualization as spirit in a pure consciousness. This consciousness is pure in the sense that it confronts an

actuality that it regards as ultimately having the conceptual character in which all given differences are overcome and as being the self-actualization of consciousness as a universal self in a world of similar individuals.

Consciousness now takes as its truth a non-actual givenness that presents it with a process of conceptual determination that consciousness is certain of possessing in the activity of pure awareness that it shares with others. Consciousness thereby confronts a form of thought that characterizes its own genuine formative activity as well as what is genuinely actual. It does so, however, in relation to an existing world that exhibits internal disruption.

In paragraph 526 Hegel compares what is going on here with stoicism so as to highlight how “faith and pure insight” is not just a reversion to a shape of self-consciousness. Stoicism takes what is in itself to be its own form of thought and essentially ignores the given determinacy of actuality. By contrast, the shape of consciousness that emerges from the experience of cultivation consists in a relationship between two kinds of consciousness, that of faith and that of pure insight. These still involve reason and a certainty that what is exhibits the category, as well as spirit and a certainty that what confronts consciousness is its self-actualization as a universal self in community with others. Consequently, the shape of faith and pure insight cannot fit into a merely stoical standpoint, which conceives of the form of thought as something separate from independent actuality.

Nor does this shape revert to the virtuous consciousness at odds with the way of the world. Although that consciousness is a form of reason, concerned with attaining self-consciousness in a transformed actuality, it is not a shape of spirit that is certain of itself as an I that is we and a we that is I. Rather, the knight of virtue opposes both its own immediate individuality and that of others and can only affirm its defining self so long as that opposition remains in force. Consciousness as faith and pure insight confronts an actuality in which the activity of it and all others already has the form of thought. This is because the spheres of life comprised by the efforts at cultivation end up having a conceptual character due to how all their distinctions invert themselves. Consequently, although the shape of faith and pure insight has a negative relationship to the world of cultivation as it immediately appears, its pure consciousness has a positive grasp of what it understands to be the equally pure truth of that world.

Insofar as this pure consciousness confronts what it takes to be the real essence of its world, it must ascribe some determinacy to that, even though none of the particular determinations of the world have been experienced to have any abiding significance. The purified actuality that consciousness here confronts thus has an aspect of givenness that allows it to be an object for consciousness.

At the end of paragraph 527, Hegel observes that “while pure thought fell within the world of culture itself as an aspect of the alienation, viz. as the

standard for judging the Good and Bad in the abstract, through having passed through the process of the whole, it has become enriched with the moment of actuality and with content. But this actuality of the essence is at the same time only an actuality of *pure*, not of *actual*, consciousness . . . it lies for the latter beyond its own actuality, for it is the flight from this actuality.”<sup>15</sup>

What is Hegel here telling us about the shape of consciousness that is arising? He makes mention of essence and pure consciousness and the essence is spoken of as an actuality of pure consciousness. Essence has been earlier associated with what is in-itself, with what confronts consciousness, but here essence is also the actuality of pure consciousness. What is in-itself is here at one with pure consciousness. Consequently, we also have self-consciousness. The purity of consciousness and of the self-consciousness that goes with it is tied to consciousness having something universal about it, which is connected to the nature of what it is conscious.

In observing faith and pure insight, we find the belief of faith comprising a pure consciousness, whereas pure insight is characterized more in terms of self-consciousness, even though both shapes involve some kind of self-consciousness. Faith is conscious of what is conceptually determinate, of an in-itself that is conceptual in form, that is intrinsically rational. Nonetheless, because faith is a pure *consciousness*, it confronts something distinguished from itself, something that is an independent given. Therefore what faith is conscious of in a pure manner has a given content, even if it is something conceptual in character.

In virtue of this given content, the essence or in itself in which consciousness seeks its own true character has the form of a representation even though it counts as what is inherently rational. This is why the pure consciousness of this essence is faith, rather than a priori reason. Representation and faith enter in because even though what is in itself is conceptually determinate and at one with the universal spiritual character of the self, it has an extrinsic givenness that only imagery can convey. Consciousness must rely upon the form of representation because the form of thought would remove any residue of independent content. Faith is beholden to representation, for the belief of faith is not mediated by reasoning that generates the content from the activity of thought. Rather, the object of faith is something upon which consciousness reflects, re-presenting what it finds given.

The pure consciousness of faith thereby comprises a dual relationship. On the one hand, consciousness relates to something that is not alien but ultimately that in which it is at one with itself. On the other hand, what consciousness confronts as its essence is still something given to pure consciousness as the non-actual absolute whose content must be represented to be accessed.

Hegel describes this particular kind of faith as “merely a *belief*.”<sup>16</sup> It does not yet comprise religion proper, let alone religion as a shape of conscious-



ness. This is true even though consciousness as faith involves an obviously religious content. What is lacking is full-blown religious community. The focus is on what proceeds in pure consciousness and not on what it means to belong to a certain religious group. The absence of religious community is manifest in Hegel's observation in paragraph 529 that "this *pure consciousness* of absolute Being is an *alienated* consciousness."<sup>17</sup>

What makes the consciousness of faith an alienated consciousness? Faith is conscious of something that is its absolute essence, the unqualified in-itself accessible through its pure consciousness. It is intrinsically rational, yet it also has an element of givenness, being what consciousness confronts in virtue of the dissolution of the world of cultivation. That given content, which must be represented to be an object of faith, is the crux of what is alien.

The consciousness drawn to faith has, however, another aspect, which has already emerged. It has its purity by reflecting itself out of the world of cultivation, as well as out of its own cultivating activities. This withdrawal into pure consciousness emerged from the debunking, critical, disruptive consciousness that unmasked the insubstantiality of its world and equally debunked its own activities. In this pure awareness, consciousness is for itself not as *this* individual in particular worldly entanglement but as universal within itself.

Hegel mentions an activity that brings this about, an activity that consists not in the particular criticisms made by the disruptive consciousness, but in something putting them all together into a whole. This encyclopedic compilation allows the unmasking to be done from a vantage that is in no way singular but a common awareness comprising the universal essence of all these disruptive activities.

Hegel describes this to be an awareness that retreats out of the world of essence-less, self-dissolving distinctions into a self that is at one with itself by relating to the world as having this character. This shape of consciousness is that of pure insight. It involves self-consciousness, but it equally stands in relation to the consciousness of faith.

Paragraph 529 offers the first observations of pure insight. Pure insight is pure to the extreme degree of having no content in itself. Its relationship to itself, that is, its consciousness of itself, is purely negative. As emergent from the disruptive consciousness, pure insight has no positive filling. It is at one with itself by engaging in the activity of overcoming distinctions that are no distinctions at all. Pure insight does not engage in cultivation and occupy itself with taking on various universal aptitudes and engaging in various universal activities. It has its purity by refraining from these endeavors and adopting a thoroughgoing negative attitude to them. Its rationality consists in engaging in this pure insight which removes itself from the problematic affairs its critique undermines.

Faith, by contrast, has a pure positive content, but it lacks the critical bent of pure insight. Nonetheless, as Hegel points out, the content of faith is the element of pure self-consciousness.<sup>18</sup> What faith confronts as the essential is not alien to thought even if it has a given content requiring representation. Pure insight is ultimately concerned with uncovering nothing but itself as well, but it does this through the negative activity of critique, which demolishes the standing of what is not really conceptually determinate. Pure insight overcomes the independent being of those differences that are no differences and, in so doing, it affirms the truth of what is rational.

Faith does very much the same, but by representing an absolute essence that is supposed to be rational. That absolute essence, however, has an independent being of its own, which can only exhibit the inner difference of conceptual determination by negating itself and undergoing the same kind of movement that was exhibited by disruptive consciousness. What faith believes in is beyond both itself and the self-dissolving mundane world, yet it counts as that which is true, that which is in intrinsic identity with the self.

Hegel observes the two sides of faith and pure insight to be determined in three respects due to the context within which they arise. First of all, there is what each is in its own right, independent of anything else. Then there is the relationship of each to the actual world. That world has not been obliterated or, for that matter, altered, because neither of these shapes acts upon the world in any practical manner. Thirdly, insofar as faith and pure insight have a relationship to the actual world that opposes consciousness, they equally have a relationship to one another.

To begin with, Hegel turns to faith and observes in paragraphs 531 and 532 what it is in and of itself. What comprises the content of faith in itself? What is the absolute for it? Faith has as its object, as the absolute essence, spirit existing “in and for itself.”<sup>19</sup> For faith, spirit is the simple eternal substance, determined in and through itself. What does it mean for faith to have as its content, as the object for its pure consciousness, spirit taken as something simple and eternal, something existing in its own right?

We have encountered spirit in various guises. Spirit was first mentioned in the section of self-consciousness in connection with recognition, as the I that is we and the we that is I. Spiritual essence further appeared as a point of contrast to the various attempts at self-actualization of consciousness as reason. Then, of course, it came into its own as a topic in the shape of consciousness of natural ethical community. What does spirit now signify as an object of faith, opposed to the consciousness of pure insight?

In paragraph 532 Hegel observes the development of the content of faith in ways that recall what happened to the content of the unhappy consciousness. First, there is consciousness of an absolute essence, which exists as simple eternal substance that nevertheless is spirit. As spirit, this absolute essence passes over into relation to others, becoming a self-sacrificing abso-

lute essence, a transitory self that then has to return from this alienated self into the first simplicity. Only in this manner is the absolute substance represented as spirit, as a unity that differentiates itself into a relation between individual selves that retain their universal identity.

What faith addresses is an absolute essence that it has come to by dealing with the world and getting an absolute insight into the nature of the world in which it has been immersed. Now the truth of that world of others is represented as a beyond. For this beyond to be spirit, it cannot just be a simple, undifferentiated absolute. It has to involve the relationship whereby it becomes an individual, but an individual whose particularity is overcome and united with the self that has an abiding universality.

In construing the absolute essence as spirit, faith unifies several factors that have come to the fore many times over. There is the unification of the infinite and the finite, achieved by the infinite becoming finite and sustaining the connection of its finitude with the infinite. This representation can be regarded as a way of truly portraying the infinite insofar as an infinite that has the finite irrevocably outside of it has a limit, a beyond, a boundary. It is therefore not really infinite but finite. Here, with absolute essence characterized as spirit, the infinite becomes finite but, because it encompasses the finite, it does not forfeit its own infinitude.

Absolute essence as spirit also unifies the universal and the individual. The universal absolute spirit individuates itself and remains in unity with the individual it becomes. Such a relationship between individuals who, in their individuality, are nonetheless universal and experience this unity as the true essence of their world has been at stake for consciousness ever since it took the shape of spirit. The ethical world gave this an immediate realization where individuals had a universal self-consciousness in their actual relation to others, where one knew oneself as a universal self-consciousness in relation to others, fulfilling one's lawful role in a natural ethical community. Consciousness, however, has experienced that natural ethical community could not truly realize spirit as the essence of objectivity because the given particularity of its law could not be reconciled with the universality of the community. The empire of law overcame that given particularity, but the formal universality of its global regime of property rights proved to be alien to the individuality of its members.

The whole situation of cultivation in face of alienation further revolved around the unification of universality and individuality in the "spiritual essence" of the community of individuals. To overcome the alienation they face, individuals sought to cultivate themselves, to make themselves universal and have that activity be the actuality of their world. That endeavor, however, has proven to be incapable of achieving an abiding unification of universality and individuality, enabling individuals to be self-conscious as

universal selves in the political and economic spheres, let alone in the verbal debunking of their predicament.

The experience of these failures has now led consciousness to seek the unification of universality and individuality beyond its mundane involvements. Through faith in an absolute essence construed as spirit, consciousness seeks to validate its certainty that what is ultimately comprises its own actualization as a self-consciousness sharing the rationality common to all.

Through faith in the spiritual absolute essence, consciousness seeks the realization of its own universal self-consciousness as an I that is we and a we that is I. Doing so involves not just representing the content of that spiritual absolute essence as it is in itself, but also retaining a relationship to the mundane world on this basis. That world is still at hand and faith must contend with it for its pure consciousness remains accompanied by awareness of what the absolute spiritual essence transcends.

What does faith dictate with respect to consciousness's relation to its world? Hegel observes that faith carries with it an overcoming of the vanity that is at work in the world of cultivation. Faith involves a service of sorts, not to political power or the siren of wealth, but to the absolute spiritual essence. Hegel does not go into any particular detail in describing what this service might be, which is understandable given how little positive content is contained in the pure consciousness of the absolute spiritual essence. Nonetheless, if determinate positive undertakings are hard to specify, it is apparent that faith mandates some disengagement from external worldly pursuits.

Is this really any different from the negating process in which pure insight engages in debunking what is irrational in the world? There are obvious similarities, even though pure insight is going to direct its critique at the efforts of pure faith, which are, after all, part of the world to which it relates. The critique that pure insight wields against the service of faith is crystallized in one general objection: the efforts faith makes to extricate itself from mundane reality show an inconsistent concern for the very prosaic affairs that are supposed to be inessential. One serves faith by forsaking certain individual things, but these sacrifices are themselves particular activities in the world, rather than essential, universal achievements. The individual's own exertions are always particular efforts of a living being who can never give up all material concerns. As Hank Williams would say, one can never get out of this world alive. The individual of faith can never escape its own biology or the conventions of society. Consequently, as Hegel observes, the exertions of faith are really only symbolic.<sup>20</sup> They only *represent* a departure from mundane affairs. In the eyes of pure insight, this merely symbolic gesture is completely pointless and hypocritical.

These conflicts come up when pure insight relates to faith. The relating of pure insight to faith and of faith to pure insight is inherent in what they are, for they have the same kind of pure consciousness and in relating to them-

selves they find themselves relating to their counterpart. Both take spirit to be what is fundamental, regarding the unity of universality and individuality to be present in their own awareness, but not yet fully realized in what they immediately confront. Faith regards the realization of that unity as a beyond, whereas pure insight takes a negative attitude toward a world in which it does not find itself fully actualized, even though it regards its pure consciousness of itself as rational spirit to be what is ultimately true. As paragraph 537 observes, pure insight regards all the flux of the world in its finite immediacy as insubstantial, as not what is genuinely true. Only by putting it in identity with its own thinking, does pure insight render existence true actuality. Because pure insight regards itself as not just rational, but also united with spiritual essence, what it must overcome in the world concerns how other individuals interrelate and view themselves and one another.

Nevertheless, as Hegel notes at the beginning of paragraph 537, pure insight regards its own consciousness as still having something contingent and individual about it that does not conform to what its certainty regards as valid. What pure insight holds to be true is not limited to the immediate being of its own awareness. Its own essential universality is something that must be arrived at through the same negative critique it wields at everything given. Only then can it regard itself as being a universal and not just individual standpoint.

To know itself as universal, pure insight needs to be able to find its standpoint universally realized, but it is contingent whether it is realized either with respect to itself or to others. This dual predicament gives pure insight its defining avocation. Although one might consider this avocation a further form of cultivation, it more specifically consists in, as paragraph 537 observes, a call to all conscious individuals to be for oneself what one should be in oneself, namely rational, a genuinely universal self that is an I that is a we. The call of pure insight is thus a universal work and a universal possession. It is something that should be had by all and it should be exercised without exception. Every consciousness should realize itself as universal, as the universal standpoint that pure insight takes itself to be. One should regard rationality as what reigns supreme among the plurality of conscious individuals and critique everything that is not at one with it.

Pure insight, however, is a pure consciousness whose rationality does not yet have any specific content. It is something that is exercised negatively against the given immediacy of the world of conscious individuals that it confronts. The presumption driving its critical engagement is that this world does not exhibit rationality. Therefore, the world it opposes must be made rational, it must be enlightened. The experience of pursuing this call is what sets up the shape of consciousness of the Enlightenment.

The call to enlightenment relates pure insight to faith by addressing those aspects of faith that pure insight finds irrational. The specific nature of faith

does obviously contain much in common with pure insight, for construing the absolute essence as spirit involves regarding what is as fundamentally exhibiting the actualization of a universal consciousness that knows itself to be rational. Nonetheless, the given content that faith must represent necessarily involves factors that seem extraneous to spiritual essence.

Most generally, the call to enlightenment is a call to all others to take up the standpoint of pure insight and make it their own. The call to enlightenment is thus directed at others with respect to how they regard themselves and everyone else. This is not a retreat to observation, to find reason in objects as they are given. The call to enlightenment is concerned with actualizing reason in the consciousness and conscious relationships of individuals. It is a call to engage in ideological struggle, combatting those whose views resist the certainties of pure insight. This will involve both a negative and a positive dimension. On the one hand, the call will entail battling against those attitudes that oppose the triumph of rationality, critiquing in particular that aspect of faith that seems to go against enlightenment. On the other hand, the call will involve a certain positive way of regarding the world. As we shall see, the positive side will reaffirm aspects of sense-certainty and perception by regarding objectivity to be merely a sensuous reality, devoid of the transcendent dimension that faith privileges.

The experience of the conflict of pure insight and faith will exhibit the one-sided character of the opponents and reveal how neither side can uphold itself. Each will discover that what it objects to in its enemy is something it ascribes to itself. Faith will be compelled to give way in certain respects, while pure insight will end up regarding objectivity to be submerged under the category of utility. All this will devolve into a shape of consciousness that Hegel will famously characterize under the rubric of absolute freedom and terror.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 489, p. 298.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 488, p. 297.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 495, p. 302, para. 497, p. 303.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 494, p. 301.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 495, p. 302.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 497, p. 303.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 506, p. 307.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 508, p. 308.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 511, p. 311.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 512, p. 312.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 521, p. 316.
12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 529, pp. 323–24.
13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 526–27, pp. 320–21.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 527, p. 321.
15. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 527, p. 322.

16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 528, p. 322.
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 529, p. 323.
18. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 529, p. 323.
19. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 531, p. 324.
20. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 534, p. 326.





## *Lecture 13*

# **From Enlightenment to Absolute Freedom and Terror**

### PART 1

Hegel begins his observation of the shape of consciousness as Enlightenment by noting that faith is the proper object against which pure insight directs its call. Pure insight, however, also has a relation to the actual world, as does faith. Hence, before addressing how pure insight contends with faith, let us observe how pure insight contends with the impure intentions and inverted insights of the world of culture and alienation from which it springs.

What does pure insight, in contrast to faith, do with regard to the actual world? Hegel has little to say here on this matter, but he really does not need to elaborate since what is essential has largely been provided in the preceding section. Pure insight basically makes its call to be enlightened, to overcome what is irrational. Precisely because what is rational is not specified in any concrete manner, the call to Enlightenment is equally pure in its appeal. This is no longer a matter of making witty comments on the irrationality of the world. The disruptive consciousness has already done that, and although its activity serves as a precursor to pure insight and faith, its display of corrosive wit is not equivalent to Enlightenment.

At the end of paragraph 539, Hegel distinguishes the Enlightenment from the witty debunking of the world of cultivation. Enlightenment goes above and beyond the verbal unmasking of the witty individual, gathering the critique of the cultivated world into a universal encompassing representation that it then strives to make the common insight of all. This universal compilation can be achieved in various ways, from the *Encyclopedias* of the French Enlightenment to the *Wikipedia* of an Internet age. What is at stake is pre-

senting in a universally accessible way a comprehensive debunking of all the irrationalities that circulate in the world.

Ultimately, however, the Enlightenment's prime, most formidable opponent is its own *Doppelgänger*, the pure consciousness of faith. Faith is the proper object of the activity of Enlightenment because in relating to faith, the Enlightenment can achieve its own self-realization. This is because, on its own self-understanding, the Enlightenment can only deal with itself. For Enlightenment there is no other genuine objectivity than what fits its certainty, whereas faith and pure insight are really the same pure consciousness. They are just opposed in terms of their form. Faith involves a pure consciousness that is not immediately self-consciousness. The essence for faith is a transcendent absolute spiritual essence, the thought of which consists in immediately given thought determinations that thereby are equally matters of representation. As transcendent and as given in the form of representation, the absolute spiritual essence is an object for faith in which it is not immediately conscious of itself. To become conscious of itself in the absolute spiritual essence, consciousness must take the actions that pure insight finds so questionable. By contrast, pure insight is immediately self-conscious and bent on resolutely eliminating all otherness. Pure insight may be certain of the truth of its way of regarding itself, but it still confronts an immediately given objectivity that must be enlightened. Faith and pure insight thus appear as pure opponents for themselves, each concerned with uniting consciousness and self-consciousness in a we that is I and an I that is we, but starting from opposite poles. All the substantial content is present in faith in the object of its consciousness. Pure insight does not have any content of its own. It just affirms the call to be rational, so as to bring what it confronts in the consciousness of others into conformity with its self-consciousness.

The ensuing confrontation unfolds in virtue of how faith and pure insight are constituted. Faith is characterized by what it knows to be true, how it knows that content, and the service it renders on that basis. All of these aspects are seized upon by pure insight in pursuing its call to Enlightenment, which counters them in a way that reflects the character of pure insight itself.

Faith maintains that the content of its belief is something in which its own true essence resides. The absolute spiritual essence is that in which faith is certain of being genuinely self-conscious. This could be regarded to be a truism in that one deals with a content of one's own in having faith. Enlightenment, however, regards this certainty as a deception. All that faith is for pure insight is a representation of the believer. It is produced by the individual consciousness and is nothing more than a content in that individual's awareness. The consciousness of faith deceives others as well as itself by presenting a representation of its own as if it were the absolute spiritual essence, existing in and of itself apart from the holder of faith. As Hegel points out, this accusation accuses faith of something that pure insight itself

does, namely, of treating its own thoughts as if they are not merely subjective, but objectively and intersubjectively essential.<sup>1</sup> In taking the content of its belief to be ultimately true, faith is doing precisely what pure insight does in calling for Enlightenment. The Enlightenment's injunction to think for oneself, to take what one thinks to be essential, to think not just as an individual but as a universal self doing what all should be doing—all this is exhibited in faith. Pure insight demands that everyone should be engaged in this common activity of thinking and thereby deal with what is absolute even though we are therein occupied with a product of our own thinking. In critiquing faith for treating the content of its thought as something absolute and not just subjective, the Enlightenment is attacking what it itself does.

There still remains the question of whether the specific content that is upheld by faith is valid. Does faith supply adequate grounds for its beliefs? Even though pure insight and faith may both be certain that truth ultimately resides in the self-actualization of consciousness as spirit, the object of faith has a given character that must be presented by representations. The content of faith consists in imagery, narratives, and all sorts of particulars of this sort. The representation of the absolute spiritual essence introduces imagined quasi-historical events and stories, all of which appear to be dubious to the scrutiny of pure insight. The pictorial, historical trappings of the object of faith are finite and subject to all the limitations to which the content of representation is subject. As such, they cannot provide any adequate support for belief in an absolute spiritual essence that transcends such limitations. Further, there are inevitably questions about whether the represented narratives are properly interpreted and whether what is recounted has been properly observed. Pure insight is compelled to raise all the doubts that pertain to the truth and significance of any events that are empirically given.

Once again, however, the critique of faith by the Enlightenment is both one-sided and unreflective. Although faith does represent the absolute spiritual essence in pictorial, narrative terms that are full of finite, contingent aspects, it hardly regards these facts as the essential basis for its belief. In taking the absolute to be spirit, faith has arisen from the same concerns that drive pure insight. Both involve a pure consciousness that turns away from what is immediately given in the world of cultivation and alienation. Both hold fast to an abstract ideal of spiritual unity, whose actual filling must be found outside of pure thought, either by way of representation or by negatively addressing the irrationality of given views and practices. Faith has certainty in its own pure consciousness. It is certain of its unity with the absolute essence and it does not have to depend upon any particular external details of its narrative. Nevertheless, faith still has to make use of these representations to enable the absolute spiritual essence to confront it as a given object.

When the Enlightenment goes after the sensuous character and finitude of the evidence supplied by the representations of faith, pure insight is attacking faith for doing what the Enlightenment does. While debunking the transcendent reality of the absolute spiritual essence of faith, the Enlightenment affirms the absolute character of sensuous, physical reality. The Enlightenment is thus according an exclusive unconditioned truth to the same sensuous, empirical material that it accuses faith of falsely employing as evidence of what has absolute standing. The Enlightenment regards what is sensuously given as the only bona fide evidence that can be provided for true actuality. It may not be sufficient evidence for the transcendent absolute of faith, but it is still what the Enlightenment privileges.

This privileging of sensuous existence is a chief positive aspect of the Enlightenment. Precisely by repudiating the represented content that faith supplies for its absolute spiritual beyond, the Enlightenment reduces this supersensible to a void, to something completely empty. The only content left is what is sensuous and perceivable. Left with an empty transcendent spiritual essence and nothing determinate but sensible phenomena, the Enlightenment will turn to the latter and treat it in accord with the demands of pure insight.

The critique that the Enlightenment directs at the service that faith enjoins has already been touched upon. All faith's efforts to escape from one's finite entanglements in the world appear ridiculous to pure insight. The aim of faith is to employ such measures to unite with the absolute spiritual essence, but dealing with a particular attachment cannot comprise, either singly or multiply, a universal disengagement by the individual. At best, any such effort is merely symbolic, and at worst, it involves a preoccupation with the very finite affairs from which detachment is sought.

Such criticism is once more merely one-sided and self-incriminating. First of all, faith may make its particular gestures of detachment, but faith can only consider them to be symbolic. That is their only real significance for faith and for that reason faith does not take them so seriously as to be preoccupied with these finite affairs. Moreover, in criticizing finite engagements for supposedly having absolute significance, the Enlightenment is repudiating what it itself ends up doing. By renouncing any service to a transcendent spiritual essence, the Enlightenment is absolutizing the domain of finite activity and its concern for particular, finite ends. In so doing, the Enlightenment is committing the very offense for which it holds faith guilty.

Despite all the above shortcomings in the Enlightenment critique of faith, faith is equally unable to defend itself against Enlightenment. At first glance, this might seem perplexing. Hegel points out in paragraph 563 that faith has, in a sense, a *divine* right of pure thought against the Enlightenment. This consists in the self-sameness, the inner difference of its absolute spiritual essence, which is ultimately impervious to all the disparities that the Enlight-

enment harps upon, since they concern what is really not essential. What faith experiences from the Enlightenment is one wrong after another, where pure insight systematically distorts the positions of faith. Nonetheless, Hegel observes, the Enlightenment has a *human* right for its own truth against faith, a right tied to the right of self-consciousness.<sup>2</sup> It is this human right that makes it impossible for faith to continue resisting the attacks of the Enlightenment and prevents the conflict of faith and pure insight from going on without any resolution.

What is this right of self-consciousness and how is it so decisive for resolving the conflict of faith and Enlightenment? This right presents an imperative that consciousness has been certain of since the shape of understanding made it impossible for knowing to validate its claims unless it regarded its object as consciousness itself. The right of self-consciousness mandates that consciousness cannot consider anything to count as valid unless it can therein be conscious of itself. Hegel describes this right as also being the negativity of the concept, which overcomes the immediacy of external givens so as to uphold the unity of universality in its own differentiation. Both the concept and self-consciousness exhibit such inner difference and the right of self-consciousness consists in putting this into practice. Here what lies at stake is applying this right of self-consciousness, which is part and parcel of the underlying certainty of pure insight, to belief.

The individual of faith takes the divine spirit to be that in which it is going to find its own true being. Nonetheless, it confronts the divine spirit as something distinct from its pure consciousness. Consequently, if faith were to submit to the right of self-consciousness, faith would have to forsake the difference that separates it from the absolute spiritual essence. Does faith, however, have to submit to that demand? It would not if that demand were external to its certainty. The conflict of faith and pure insight could persist. If, however, the right of self-consciousness is not external, but inherent in faith's own standpoint, faith must relent. As Hegel observes, faith must cave in before the right of self-consciousness because it cannot fail to recognize that the things it is being criticized for are indeed part of its consciousness.<sup>3</sup> The truth represented in the absolute spiritual essence does affirm that what is should ultimately be the actualization of self-consciousness. This truth, however, is unrealized so long as the absolute spiritual essence retains its transcendence, to which the form of representation is connected. So, in being conscious of itself, faith cannot help but see the disparities in how it is operating.

On the other hand, faith does not accuse the Enlightenment of a similar fault. To clarify why this is case and where the resolution of the conflict of faith and pure insight leads, we must turn to consider the truth of the Enlightenment as it is experienced by consciousness.

What does the Enlightenment turn out to be? On the one hand, the Enlightenment wages its ideological struggle with faith, giving itself a negative, corrosive reality. On the other hand, the Enlightenment has a positive reality. This positive reality consists first of all in simply leading an insightful way of life. What this amounts to is described in paragraph 557. To think for oneself and follow the call to Enlightenment involves treating every determinate content as finite and regarding any notion of absolute essence as empty and void. This entails treating the individuality of consciousness and of all else as what has true being and regarding individuality to be excluded from absolute essence, the non-actual substance to which faith directs itself. Consciousness as Enlightenment thereby appears to echo sense-certainty, privileging finite sensuous immediate facticity as true reality. Hegel, however, points out that consciousness as Enlightenment does not revert back to sense-certainty.<sup>4</sup> The difference resides in how this return to sensuous existence is grounded on an insight into the nullity of all other shapes of consciousness that look beyond sense-certainty. It thus involves an accompanying awareness of the irrationality of those other standpoints. Sense-certainty is here being presented as the absolute truth, as a theoretical position arising from the ideological struggle of Enlightenment and faith. It represents a positive doctrine of the Enlightenment: that objectivity is in truth individual and sensuous in character.

This doctrine serves as a counterpart to the third positive aspect of the truth of the Enlightenment. The elimination of any determinate content to absolute essence has left it a void, ceding all determinate place to sensuous actuality. The Enlightenment, however, cannot allow sensuous actuality to count in its immediacy. Instead, driven by the right of self-consciousness, the Enlightenment is now going to subsume all sensuous actuality under the sway of utility.

What does it mean for all sensuous actuality to be held by consciousness to have utility? If everything actual is a sensuous thing and all sensuous things have utility, they exist for some consciousness or other for whom they are useful. They are not ends in themselves. They have no intrinsic worth. If they are going to have any value, it is in respect of how they serve the interests of some conscious individual.

Kant brings out similar ramifications in his discussion of teleology in his *Critique of Judgment*. He describes how certain things will serve other things in nature, some being consumed by something else and others figuring as an instrument enabling something else to occur.<sup>5</sup> Something more is at stake here, however, where every existent sensuous thing is useful and useful not just for other sensuous things but for consciousness individuals in general. For the Enlightenment, everything that is is for another and not for itself. This is not due to some natural law operating independently of self-consciousness. Rather, it follows from the certainty of pure insight that what is is rational and what is rational actualizes self-consciousness as a universal

standpoint. Through the struggle with faith, what has been reduced to sensuous phenomena. These must be made at one with universal self-consciousness. This cannot be achieved by devouring all things or by reducing self-consciousness to a bone. Instead, things must be made to stand under a universal subsuming to use by and on behalf of conscious individuals. This is what the Enlightenment achieves by imposing utility upon objectivity.

One can regard this embrace of utility as not just a matter of removing intrinsic value from all sensuous things, but more of leaving no room in the world for anything that could be a good in itself. All there can be are factors with instrumental value. Everything just has a value by serving something else. Further, every purpose that something serves is always itself going to be relative to some further end for the sake of which it is undertaken. Accordingly, even though things may all serve some consciousness individual, conscious individuals can also be treated as means to some further end. The Enlightenment's world of utility may serve the right of self-consciousness, but that proviso may turn back upon itself.

The Enlightenment's call to be rational has led consciousness to view sensuous finite reality as exhaustive of actuality and to regard no actual thing to be anything more than instrumental and relative. To be consistent, consciousness must apply considerations of utility to the sensuous individuality of its own concerns and activities.

Faith would have to look at this embrace of the sensuous and of its subsuming to utility as just a capitulation to the most utter shallowness. If, however, faith cannot successfully defend itself and the Enlightenment emerges triumphant, what happens to faith? Hegel describes its fate in paragraph 573, just before observing the culmination of the truth of the Enlightenment. Faith ultimately cannot deny that those aspects of its construal of the divine and its service that are critiqued by pure insight really are alien to its pure consciousness. When faith then peels away these elements of its belief under the onslaught of the Enlightenment, it becomes indistinguishable from pure insight, with one exception. Relinquishing all the particular aspects of its representation, faith now leaves the absolute spiritual essence as empty and void as does the Enlightenment. By giving up its gestures of pious service, faith also has no endeavors left to pursue than those same mundane activities that occupy the Enlightenment. Faith, however, is dissatisfied with its predicament. On the one hand, it finds the shallowness of being, the reduction of actuality to sensuous existence, a thoroughly alienating predicament. On the other hand, faith has no alternative left but the indefinite void of an absolute for which it can provide no content. Faith can only long for a divine that is indeterminable and accordingly unknowable. Everything else is finite and instrumental. This is the faith of deism.

Such faith and the correlative view that the world is finite and useful is the final product of the Enlightenment. The struggle of faith and Enlighten-

ment has resolved itself and issued in two complementary forms of Enlightenment. One is that embodied in the enlightened self who is dissatisfied with the finite, sensuous, instrumental character of actuality and longs for an indeterminate beyond. The other is that enlightened self who is satisfied with the actual sensuous here and now and is happy to treat everything as useful and only useful.

As Hegel points out, the embrace of all reality as sensuous and relative is the embrace of another absolute.<sup>6</sup> It is just as abstract as the abstract void of the absolute essence. Sensuous matter is just as indeterminate as the empty beyond. Both these two varieties of the Enlightenment find themselves in possession of a pure essence. One is given in the form of an insensible beyond. It is completely abstract. It cannot be given any determinate content, because any determinate content would depend upon representation and bring us back to something finite. The other pure essence is given in the form of sensuous immediacy. It is that which is the essence of everything sensible and instrumental. Pure insight does not just point to what is here and now like sense-certainty. It is a form of consciousness as reason and as spirit, so it is thinking about what all must grasp to be the fundamental element of actuality. It starts with the sensuous given, but it reflects upon it, extracting what is its rational essence. So the Enlightenment comes to pure matter as the underlying substance of sensuous, useful reality. What it uncovers is really not distinguishable from the absolute essence that faith takes as its object. Matter has no sensuous properties. It is just an abstract substrate of all sensuous properties. It is equally indeterminate as the absolute insensible essence. It is equally empty and equally just an abstraction, a thought. So the two kinds of Enlightenment end up converging. One makes appeal to an indeterminate divine as that in which one is supposed to find one's true essence. The other finds actuality in the sensuous given that can only be thought of as ultimately consisting of matter, equally abstract as the God of deism, and affording a universal realization of self-consciousness by being generally subsumed under utility.

Utility may be suspect to faith, but utility provides pure insight with its final realization. As paragraph 580 observes, the useful sensuous thing offers pure insight a finite object that it no longer need disavow in the way in which it dismissed the sensuous content that faith employed in its representation of the absolute essence. The relativity of utility is what is absolute for pure insight and it counts even though it is present in sensuous objects.

One might think that pure insight should not be dealing with objects, since pure insight is a simple, pure self-consciousness that enjoins us all to be rational so as to be conscious of oneself as a universal self-consciousness and remove anything that is not in parity with that. Here, however, we have pure insight embracing an object that is not a pure beyond but a sensuous finite thing. How does utility serve the purpose of validating the certainty of pure



insight? Further on in paragraph 580, Hegel points out that utility has two sides to it. On the one hand, utility is tied to a subsisting thing. There is no utility if there is nothing to be useful. On the other hand, what is useful is purely relative, for it is absolutely for something else. So even though the object of utility has a subsistence, its subsistence is just as much canceled. It really does not have an independent being, for its genuine being lies in something else that it serves. Through the experience of Enlightenment, pure insight has come to regard everything it confronts as being of this relative character. Can such an objectivity possibly provide the actualization of self-consciousness as reason and spirit?

Does the whole project of the Enlightenment collapse in face of the same sort of problem that afflicted the most rudimentary shape of self-consciousness, desire? That shape could only be conscious of the self by removing the otherness of the object of desire. Obliterating that object, however, equally removed its removal of objectivity. The satisfaction of desire left consciousness confronting other objects once again, making its intended self-consciousness revert to consciousness once more. With pure insight's consciousness of utility, however, the realization of use need not involve a consumption of things that leaves no trace behind.

Moreover, the object of utility is not merely an object of understanding, whose true essence lies in an insensible beyond of force and law. With consciousness as understanding, objectivity had been reduced to something phenomenal that also did not really have a subsistence of its own. It did have an apparent being, but that being was equally overridden. The utility of the Enlightenment, however, grounds actuality not in a supersensible realm of law, but instead in the being of sensible things for pure insight. Does this not allow pure insight to be completely self-conscious in what it confronts and to recognize that its self-consciousness is shared by all other individuals for whom objectivity is equally useful?

Hegel observes that consciousness of utility cannot actualize pure self-consciousness because that consciousness still confronts something distinguished from itself.<sup>7</sup> Pure insight does not encounter itself in what is useful because sensuous objects of utility are not themselves the activity of its consciousness. They are not the conceptualizing that brings everything to a conceptual unity, nor the consciousness of oneself as spirit, as a unity of individual and universal self-consciousness. There is still a difference at hand.

The experience of this abiding difference is what must motivate the emergence of a new shape of consciousness. Hegel characterizes the shape that follows from the consciousness of the Enlightenment under the heading of absolute freedom and terror. Our impending task will be to understand how that shape arises out of the final culmination of the Enlightenment with its certainty of the utility of sensuous actuality. The shape of absolute freedom

and terror presents a world in which all individuals engage in determining the world they share in common in a universal, lawful manner. They will figure as members of a community where everything that is done is done by the individual and is equally universal in character. Everything is the work of each individual and each individual works in a universal way. This regime of participatory self-legislation is the immediate starting point from which this shape unfolds. If there is going to be any kind of differentiation it will be between the universal work or universal willing of the community and the actual single individuality of its participants.

## PART 2

At the end of the paragraph right before the opening of “Absolute Freedom and Terror,” Hegel describes utility as being that by which self-consciousness can see through the object and be certain of itself.<sup>8</sup> It can be related to itself in sensible reality insofar as the certainty of utility has reduced objectivity to something that is for it. The very independent being of actuality is its being for an other, for self-consciousness. This insight into the utility of sensuous reality will prove to be true knowledge to the extent that consciousness experiences the world to be something in which self-consciousness is at one with itself.

Self-consciousness now immediately possesses universal certainty of itself in everything to the extent that everything is useful for it and every other conscious individual. Everything is, in principle, subject to its ends and those of others. Thereby individuals possess a consciousness that is pure in that it is aware of everything being subject to its own unity, which is comparable to that of every other self. Nonetheless, as Hegel notes at the very beginning of “Absolute Freedom and Terror,” what is exhibited in utility is still partly an opposing object, which is to say that consciousness does not immediately find itself to be in its own possession.<sup>9</sup>

Utility is a predicate of the object. It is not a predicate of the subject. Utility is not the subject’s immediate and sole actuality. The subject is still distinct from what has utility for it. As Hegel notes in paragraph 583, given this difference, what is present confronting the enlightened consciousness is an empty semblance of subjectivity, which separates self-consciousness from what is in its possession.

For everything to be useful is not equivalent to everything being used and being taken into possession by self-consciousness. There is still a gap that needs to be resolved. There is a task at hand that still must be fulfilled if consciousness is to validate its certainty. For consciousness to be conscious of itself in what is for it, for objectivity really to be its own, consciousness has to do more than just confront reality as useful. Rather, consciousness

must make use of all reality, making it its own work, and do so in a way where consciousness does not have to act upon something that is given independently of it. This calls for more than an isolated engagement, which cannot possibly achieve such global actualization. It requires instead a realization of spirit, of individuals in their plurality making their world their common work.

Absolute freedom is initially characterized in paragraph 586 in terms such as these, by way of a comparison to utility. So long as utility was the predicate of all real being, there remained a difference between self-consciousness and its objects of potential use. Having experienced that discrepancy, consciousness now no longer begins its movement by relating to something alien from which it returns to itself. Rather, for consciousness the object is the plurality of conscious selves themselves so that here conscious individuals will determine their own order as their common work. The opposition with which they contend will consist solely in the distinction between individual and universal consciousness.

How is this so and why should it involve absolute freedom and terror? In recognition of how the project of the Enlightenment requires overcoming the discrepancy in utility by putting all reality in use and making it the work of all, we now have consciousness certain of participating in a world in which individuals immediately wield a determining that is immediately universal. In their immediate individual activity, without the intercession of any intermediary bodies, individuals will be doing something universal that determines the world to which they belong. Each and every individual will be doing that directly. They will thereby be exercising an absolute freedom in that the world to which they belong will be determined by their activity such that their own individual willing will be immediately universal. By so participating in such a community, they wield a freedom that is absolute insofar as no otherness confronts them. Here their activity is such that everything is not just useful and subject to possible employment as their means. Rather everything is being used and everything is their determination. This is achieved insofar as what is being determined by individuals is their own sphere of activity.

For this to be the case, there can be no ordering to which individuals are subject that they do not will. Nor can there be any particular role that is not equally universal, not equally determinative of the whole. Any distinction between individual and universal willing would impinge upon this freedom. It would render the freedom of the individual no longer absolute but relative and conditioned by factors that the individual will does not determine.

To overcome the abiding gap between the utility of things and their actual permeation by the determining of each individual, individuals must directly co-determine their world so that there is nothing that they cannot recognize as the actuality of their willing. Then they truly cannot help but be aware of

themselves in being aware of their world. That world is the actuality of their absolute self-rule.

There must be an immediate identity between the will of the ruling order and the will of the individual, that is, between the universal and all individual wills. This proviso exhibits what Rousseau defends in his social contract theory. In order for each individual will to determine everything in its polity and do so in conjunction with everyone else without impeding one another, their wills must all be immediately universal. This requires that their willing have a universal form and consist of willing law that emanates from all and applies to all. Rousseau does a good job of explaining why this must be so in his theory of the general will. If you are going to exercise a willing in which your individual willing is at the same time universal and determinative of your whole community, your willing has to be a willing of law and a willing of law in which you co-legislate with everyone else directly. Otherwise, your particular will will be opposed by other wills and fail to be determinative of a whole whose governing laws are the product of each and everyone's volition. You have to be willing in conjunction with everyone else and willing something that will not be directed at a particular individual. Else, your volition would be a merely particular act, limited by other acts of other individuals that limit your volition by determining something independently of your own determination. Accordingly, what is willed must come from all, be directed at all, and remain standing and determining until rescinded and replaced by further acts of common lawful willing. Everyone must participate directly in a self-legislation that governs all aspects of the community to which one belongs. Anything less would leave an order that is not determined by every individual's will.

Hegel points out, as Rousseau earlier had done, that absolute freedom requires that there be no distinction between office-holders and non-office-holders.<sup>10</sup> If any such distinction is allowed, measures will be taken by office-holders that are not being willed by the rest. In that case, the office-holders wield a particular will of their own that acts upon others and not upon themselves. On both counts the unity of individual and universal wills will be lacking, undermining the absolute character of freedom.

Even if individuals were to consent to be governed by others, their consent is different from the will exercised by those to whom they have consented. One might imagine that what the rulers do with one's consent is something of which one is the author, but in actuality what the rulers will is distinct from one's own immediate will. To eliminate this difference, there must be a participatory lawmaking by all, without representation. Only then can there be the absolute freedom where the individual as an individual is equally universal in determining the whole.

This participatory self-legislation requires, as Hegel observes, that individuals withdraw from all of their other determinate functions, be it with

regard to particular political, social, or household involvements.<sup>11</sup> These all comprise matters that are external to the workings of self-legislation and therefore comprise alien limitations to its all-pervasive rule. Rousseau recognizes this and thereby denounces the word of finance as the word of the slave.<sup>12</sup> The independent activities of wealth run counter to what is determined by self-legislation and Rousseau accordingly wants to eliminate any kind of social interaction where individuals act upon one another, forming relations of dependency distinct from the self-rule realized in participatory legislation. Instead, everyone should become a self-sufficient farmer who need not interact with others in any other capacity than as co-legislator. Similarly, Rousseau inveighs against any kind of representation, since allowing anyone else to make laws on one's behalf undermines one's absolute freedom.

Only by so removing all intermediary bodies, all representation, all delegations of authority, and all interactions apart from engagement in self-legislation, does the regime of absolute freedom provide what utility could not: an actuality in which every individual participant is immediately involved in a universal determination of the order their activities together comprise. Nonetheless, the experience of absolute freedom turns out to be an experience of terror.

The specter of terror issues from the need for an immediate identity between the universal will of the regime and the individual wills of all its members. Only if this immediate identity can be maintained can the regime be the work of each individual and provide the universal self-actualization that is promised by participatory self-legislation. Carl Schmitt takes the essence of democracy to reside in this immediate identity between the individual and universal will, or, to put it otherwise, between the will of all and the general will.<sup>13</sup> Allegedly, self-rule can only occur if what the state wills is identical to what every citizen wills, since otherwise, the will of the state will only be the will of a particular group of citizens, a faction, which lords over everyone else. Although this endorsement of an immediate identity of individual and universal wills may not be the essence of democracy per se, it is the credo of absolute freedom.

In order to maintain the immediate identity of the will of all individuals with the universal will of the regime, they must will with unanimity. If there is any diversity, any real plurality in the choices of individuals, adopted laws will only immediately conform to the will of those who supported them. Under any conditions of real political plurality, the immediate identity of absolute freedom will be violated since the law will not be identical to what all have willed and the order of the regime will not be the work of each individual's immediate will. Consequently, in order to uphold absolute freedom, unanimity must be enforced and all political divisions must be eliminat-

ed. Anyone who diverges from that unanimity must be liquidated if absolute freedom is to be maintained.

The problem of disunity, however, extends not just to any differences in what laws individuals want to will. It also applies to any particular action that is taken to enforce the laws that have been adopted. Any measure taken by the regime is a real act of enforcement or adjudication only insofar as some individual or individuals do something particular in reference to particular individuals in particular circumstances. Even if lawmaking might be undertaken in unison by citizen clones, government enforcement cannot be undertaken by all and in reference to all. It must involve particular interventions taken by particular officials directed at particular individuals and situations. Consequently, any government action amounts to the action of a faction rather than an act of the will of all. The defenders of absolute freedom must then oppose the government as a usurper of the general will and replace it with another government. The same problem, however, immediately recurs, for as soon as the new government takes particular actions, it equally usurps the general will with its own factional measures.

As a consequence, the rule of absolute freedom turns into a rule of terror, where all individual lawmakers and all individual enforcers of the laws find themselves suspect and prey to destruction as enemies of liberty. This predicament of absolute freedom and terror is, of course, reflected in the continual paroxysms of the French Revolution, where successive revolutionary governments were exposed as factions and their leaders had their heads chopped off like cabbages. As Hegel observes, such decapitations are of no individual significance, for they are the fate awaiting anyone who takes determinate action under the regime of absolute freedom.<sup>14</sup> The moment one acts, either by proposing a determinate law that is not immediately willed by everyone else or by taking any particular act of governing, one violates the absolute freedom of others. The only way to remove the violation is by eliminating the differentiated individuality of one's will.

In becoming generalized terror, absolute freedom undermines itself. It seeks to directly empower every self-conscious individual in a universal way, but in doing so, it ends up striking at the very existence of the individual, whose immediate existence is not identical to that of anyone else.

The collapse of absolute freedom into its self-consuming reign of terror might seem to invite a return to definite spheres of ethical community, with particular intermediary groups and particular roles that go against the immediate identity of universal and individual wills. That path, however, has already shown its untenability for the validation of the certainty of consciousness. Instead, absolute freedom and terror leads to the shape of consciousness of morality. This new shape will overcome the foibles of the immediate identification of individuality and universality by enjoining individuals to

leave behind the immediate contents of their volition and interact in terms of their own independent inner self-legislation.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 549, p. 334.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 563, p. 343.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 563, p. 344.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 558, p. 341.
5. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), para. 63, pp. 239–41.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 574, p. 350.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 580, p. 354.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 581, p. 355.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 582, p. 355.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 585, p. 357.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 588, p. 358.
12. J.-J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1950), 93.
13. Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 9.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 590, p. 360.





## Lecture 14

# Morality

### PART 1

Hegel presents the shape of morality as the final configuration of consciousness as spirit. It is important to remember that the entire *Phenomenology of Spirit* is divided into three main sections—consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason. The shapes of spirit all fall within the section of reason between the forms of observation through reason as testing laws and the shapes of religion. Within the subsection of spirit, morality follows upon natural ethical community and self-alienated spirit, paving the way for what Hegel will characterize as the shapes of absolute spirit.

A proper understanding of the shape of morality depends upon keeping in view the phenomenological differences between reason per se and reason that is qualified as spirit and reason that is qualified as absolute spirit. In all of the shapes of consciousness as reason we find a unity of consciousness and self-consciousness to which individuality and universality are ascribed in various ways.

Consciousness as reason was initially identified as the shape of consciousness uniting consciousness and self-consciousness, such that consciousness is aware in confronting what is other to it that it is confronting itself. This unity could be regarded as the general presupposition of reason to the extent that reason regards its own cognition as being fundamentally objective. Rational thought is not subjective and empty. It is an objective thought that can get at the general nature of what is.

The other side of reason lies in the relation between universal and individual. One might also include the particular, since self-consciousness has been observed to involve an inner difference, a differentiation that just as much overcomes its otherness. This inner differentiation is exhibited in the con-

cept, whose unity as universal entails its differentiation into particulars that are themselves individuals. An easy way of comprehending how universality is intrinsically connected with particularity and individuality is to consider what Hegel calls the abstract universal. The abstract universal is illustrated by any feature that is common to a plurality of factors in which it inheres as a common mark. All of these factors could be regarded as its particulars, but to be particulars they equally have to be differentiated from one another. Otherwise, they would lose their plurality. Each of these particulars has the same relation to the universal by being an instance of it. In that regard, they are not distinct from one another. Nonetheless, the universal cannot be distinguished from the particular unless there is a possible plurality of particulars and these can only be plural instances if they are differentiated particulars, that is, individuals. So if we want to think about universality, we have to think about individuality as well as particularity.

To the extent that reason grasps a differentiated objective content in the unity of thought, reason will display the same kind of internal differentiation that characterizes self-consciousness. Insofar as reason involves concepts that are objective, allowing it to get at truth, reason exhibits not just the inner differentiation of self-consciousness but the unification of consciousness and self-consciousness. In other words, with reason, self-consciousness can be certain that what falls within its internal differentiation is at one with the independent determination of objects of consciousness.

Now in considering all these aspects of reason, we have not yet made any mention of spirit. Spirit was first anticipated in connection with recognitive self-consciousness, as an I that is we and a we that is I. This whiff of spirit is clearly a further development of the identity of self-consciousness and consciousness, for it comprises a relationship to another consciousness by which an individual consciousness is consciousness of being a universal self-consciousness, different from but equivalent in structure to its counterpart. In recognition, each consciousness exhibits reason in general by being self-aware in its awareness of something other. The relation between selves, however, adds a further element, that each consciousness recognizes itself to be a *universal* self-consciousness.

Spirit thus affords a further development of reason as consciousness that can only occur when consciousness is involved in a relationship of a plurality of self-conscious individuals. Their interrelationship enables them all to recognize one another as being not just self-conscious but universally self-conscious. This is because the object they confront is another self like themselves, rendering their own self something they now know to be of the same type as that of another. Hence, in being conscious of someone else who returns the favor, they know themselves to be confronting someone who shares in a common rationality implicit in the unity between self-consciousness and consciousness.

Spirit as a shape of consciousness therefore brings with it a self-knowledge possessing a universality that otherwise would not be available. From the very beginning, the shapes of consciousness as spirit have involved relations of plurality in which self-conscious individuals interact in different modalities and thereby comprehend themselves in different manners.

Given the pervasive presence of plural relations, of intersubjectivity, why identify the shapes of spirit any longer as shapes of consciousness? Are we not really observing communal structures in which self-conscious individuals interrelate in certain ways whereby they know themselves in different manners? To warrant consideration as shapes of consciousness all these shapes of spirit must still involve the defining opposition of consciousness. They must retain a distinction between truth and certainty, between what knowing confronts and its relation to what it confronts, between the standard of validity and what is putatively valid. This will still be true even if what is taken to be in itself is not just a unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, but a certain kind of community. We must be on the lookout for the abiding opposition at issue despite the added complexity that the interrelations of spirit bring with them.

What then is the shape of consciousness that we observe under the rubric of “morality”? We have an agency that, like the participant in absolute freedom, regards itself as determining what is absolutely essential. Thanks to the experience of terror, however, the consciousness of morality sees itself as determinative of what counts only in abstracting from its own given individuality. The moral point of view involves a self-consciousness that is certain of willing all that is essential and not illusory, but of doing so by ignoring everything particular and given about itself. This should allow moral consciousness to be determinative of a universal community of moral subjects without having to obliterate the individual existence of its members.

Hegel describes this moral standpoint as spirit that is certain of itself.<sup>1</sup> This characterization implies something that does not come out explicitly—that morality as a shape of consciousness still involves an interrelation of a plurality of individuals. This is ignored by the prevalent contemporary tendency to treat morality as if it were simply a matter of the moral agent acting individually. Nonetheless, even contemporary moral theorists find themselves compelled to acknowledge that somehow moral action is related to other moral subjects, who comprise a moral community. Moral conduct does not just involve activities that are technical in character, where an agent acts upon things that are not subjects. Morality instead is recognized to concern activity that has ramifications for other individuals who have a morally relevant character. Morality may not involve a collective engagement like the participatory legislating of absolute freedom and terror, but its individual undertakings still provide spirit with certainty of itself, certainty that moral

conduct as a member of the moral community is what counts. How does this standpoint emerge and develop?

The general will of absolute freedom was a will immediately composed of all individuals taken as atoms. They were taken as atoms because all intermediary organizations were eliminated. Every other association had been dissolved, because if there were any such groupings, their members would already be determined by partitions that would be the basis of their interactions rather than being something they will.

In morality, individuals act toward others in a way that is universal, but no longer with an immediate identification of the individual will with what is regarded to be universal willing. Under the regime of absolute freedom, the universal will was just what all individuals immediately chose to do collectively. Consciousness as morality is certain of acting universally to do what is essential only by willing independently of all given contents, including the given inclinations and interests that individuate it from everyone else.

Morality, as self-certain spirit, involves self-consciousness. Morality comprises a moral world view that is also a self-understanding. As moral consciousness, the individual understands him- or herself as being ultimately bound by duty, where duty itself is understood to be completely pure in character. Moral duty consists in the obligation to determine oneself with respect to others in a way that is completely universal and essential and independent of all the particular givens that distinguish individuals and the particular contingencies of the world.

Consciousness as morality is thus a self-consciousness that knows duty to be the absolute essence. It knows itself to be bound only by duty and it knows that it has its own pure consciousness in this substance of duty. Pure consciousness figured earlier in the shape of consciousness as Enlightenment. There consciousness was pure insofar as it had as its object the universal spiritual essence represented by faith. Faith was a pure consciousness of an absolute essence that transcended the world of cultivation and whose content had otherwise to be filled in by representation. Here in morality we have a pure consciousness of duty. Duty is the object of a pure consciousness owing to its strictly universal character. Pure consciousness is not an empirical consciousness, confronting contingent particular givens. Rather, pure consciousness confronts something purely universal, purely conceptually determinate.

Duty, which the moral self knows to be its own truth, its own essence, is something completely universal. It obliges the moral individual to be determinative in a way that is not conditioned by particular givens. Moral duty enjoins individuals to act in a lawful way that will realize a community of moral subjects whose moral activity is what alone has essential significance.

Nonetheless, although duty comprises the sole essential purpose of moral individuals, they equally confront particular givens within and without them-

selves to which duty is indifferent. The world to which they belong has a character of its own independent of the purity of duty. There is a nature, both within and without the individual, with its own laws that the call of duty regards as inessential. Accordingly, as Hegel notes in paragraph 600, the moral point of view is conscious of a relationship between its moral being, which it knows to be independent and essential, and natural being, which is given independently of duty. Insofar as what is given by nature is completely indifferent and independent of moral purpose, moral consciousness is certain of the complete inessentiality of nature and the exclusive essentiality of duty. Since, however, consciousness as morality must contend with both nature and duty, the experience of the moral worldview will be determined by how the conflict of these two domains works itself out.

The starting point of the experience of moral consciousness is the certainty of the moral self that what alone counts for it is duty, which is completely abstract and universal in character. What the moral self considers to count for itself is something it equally considers to count for all moral selves. Duty has a universal character in that it not only prescribes a universal mode of conduct for the moral individual but directs its pure obligation to every moral subject. Consequently, pure duty immediately places the moral individual into a community of morally accountable individuals who all regard themselves as bound by the imperative of realizing duty. This imperative is something they each must realize by determining themselves in opposition to a given world. Although that world and duty are indifferent to one another, there is a positive relation between them, because duty involves realizing itself in the world and somehow establishing a harmony between the two.

The resulting predicament sets the moral subject in opposition to a world of nature that it presupposes to be independent of and indifferent to the realization of duty. The moral agent unavoidably confronts a world that it knows to be not in harmony with duty, a world in which there can be no guarantee that the individual will succeed in doing its duty and gaining the happiness that the satisfaction of duty brings. Indeed, happiness, understood as the satisfaction of desired ends, may be attained by those who do not act out of duty.

For the moral consciousness, of course, what counts is not being happy, but acting out of duty and thereby being deserving of happiness. One might be tempted to conclude, as Kant's theory of morality might suggest, that happiness has no role to play, that being happy has no moral significance, and that moral worth resides solely in acting out of duty. In paragraph 602, Hegel observes to the contrary that moral consciousness cannot renounce happiness and leave it out of its absolute focus. This is because the purpose of pure duty contains within it the individual consciousness. After all, the moral subject has the individual conviction of knowing him- or herself to be bound by duty. The certainty of having duty is something for the individual

consciousness and moral conduct involves the individual consciousness becoming aware of fulfilling duty, which requires engaging in an activity determining the world. The fulfillment of duty automatically contains one's intuition of one's actualization of duty. This will entail happiness to the extent that happiness consists in the perceived satisfaction of one's ends.

As Hegel points out, the achievement of happiness thus lies in the concept of the actualization of morality. This is something that Aristotle showed in his examination of virtue. Aristotle noted that virtue, unlike all other types of activity, has happiness intrinsic to it.<sup>2</sup> Any activity that is not for its own sake but is instrumental could be performed without achieving its end and therefore might not involve satisfaction and happiness. By contrast, insofar as virtue is an activity performed for its own sake, or an activity that, one might say, is done not for an ulterior motive but out of duty, it cannot fail to bring satisfaction. The element of satisfaction is thus contained in the very concept of the actualization of duty. That actualization is something done consciously by the individual who acts out of duty and acting out of duty is something that will bring satisfaction to the moral individual. It cannot fail to do so.

Indeed, the pursuit of happiness is also, as Hegel observes, built into the disposition of morality.<sup>3</sup> Morality as a disposition does not aim at remaining a disposition in contrast to action. It is a disposition to act and realize duty. As such, it is equally a disposition to gain the satisfaction that is brought by the fulfillment of duty.

Furthermore, duty involves not only happiness but nature as well. The actualization of duty consists in action on the part of the individual, who, as a living individual, has a nature and acts within and upon a world with a nature of its own. In both respects the actualization of morality depends upon nature conforming to duty. This dual conformity of inner and outer nature is inherent in the very concept of morality.

Moral consciousness must therefore *think* the harmonization of duty and nature. Duty requires acting and acting involves getting both the nature of the individual and the nature of the external world to be determined by duty. At the same time, moral consciousness presupposes the indifference of duty and nature. For this reason, the required harmonization is just a thought. It is, however, a necessary thought for morality, for morality cannot apprehend itself to be what is absolutely significant without thinking this harmonization of duty with inner and outer nature.

Moral consciousness must thus postulate the harmony of morality and nature. The thought of this harmony is a postulate because it is something merely hypothetical. It is only a thought, not an actuality. What is actual is the certainty that the harmony is essential and the indifferent opposition of the two domains.

In paragraph 602 Hegel makes a point that foreshadows the move from moral duty to the morality of conscience. He points out that the notion of

morality really revolves around a unity of pure and individual consciousness, which ought to become actual for moral consciousness. This unity is a fundamental demand of reason in general, but here it first takes the specific form of the harmony of nature and duty. The actuality of morality consists in the individual making his or her own natural being conform to the demands of moral obligation through action that aims to do the same with regard to external nature and duty.

On the one hand, as paragraph 603 observes, moral consciousness must contend with the nature of the individual, who has a character given independently of duty. This nature within the individual consists broadly speaking of the sensibility of the moral subject, the natural endowment of the individual that has its own desires, impulses, and inclinations. These afford the individual purposes that oppose the pure purpose of duty. Morality thus confronts the problem of overcoming the divergent inclinations of its own given nature, without which it cannot begin to achieve the harmony of duty with the external world.

How can moral consciousness resolve this looming conflict between duty and the sensibility of the individual? The moral individual is painfully aware of having a natural sensibility with desires and impulses external to the purpose of duty. To realize duty and be moral, one must overcome this opposition within oneself, without which there is no possibility of fulfilling duty in the world.

The unity of sensibility and duty is what actual morality would be. Morality can have no reality in the world unless this harmony comes to be. Accordingly, consciousness cannot be certain of morality, of having duty, unless it can presume that this unification can occur. If this harmony cannot take place, morality is a complete delusion and an empty word. Moral consciousness must thus postulate that there is this unity. Once again, this postulated unity is a mere thought because it is not an actuality.

Consequently, the starting point of moral consciousness involves a double postulation of harmony in face of the double opposition of duty to inner and outer nature. Insofar as the consciousness knows itself to be bound by pure duty, it equally knows that duty to be in opposition to the independent being of the world confronting it and to the independent natural being of its own individuality. It thereby equally knows that its certainty requires that it postulate or think the harmonization of duty with both opposing factors, for the validation of morality depends on that harmonization. These strictures face moral consciousness with a dilemma, for consciousness must admit that morality requires the overcoming of an opposition that the certainty of pure duty takes for granted. Moral consciousness finds itself confronting a task that seems to be hopelessly contradictory—namely, it has to overcome a divide that its own act of overcoming must presuppose.

This seems to leave the whole enterprise of moral action something that one can only be striving to realize, without ever reaching its consummation. In other words, consciousness is left regarding the realization of morality to be something that must be put off to infinity. The postulated fulfillment of duty thus turns out to be an infinite task in two respects. On the one hand, it is an abiding task, from which one can never be relieved. On the other hand, it is a task always yet to be fulfilled.

What makes the fulfillment of duty an infinite task is that sensibility can never be eliminated without canceling the agency of the individual. Just as absolute freedom could never assure the identity of the individual and universal wills so long as citizens retained their differentiated plurality, so morality can never secure the identity of inclination with pure duty so long as the individual retains its living nature. Kant may sometimes speak as if acting out of duty is equivalent to completely ignoring sensibility and inclination, but one cannot do anything without inclination and impulse. The fulfillment of duty cannot be indifferent to sensibility. Acting morally inescapably requires getting inclinations and impulses to conform to duty.

That requirement is problematic in two respects. First, any achievement of harmony can only be considered a fleeting agreement, given the contingency and variability of natural inclination. Second, if inclination conformed to duty by nature in an abiding way, there would be nothing for morality to do. There would be no room left for morality for moral activity is predicated upon the opposition of pure duty to an inner and outer nature that does not yet conform to moral law. Duty does not contain its own realization but is in principle something yet to be realized. That is the defining predicament that distinguishes morality from ethical community. In ethical community, the fulfillment of the duties involved performing roles that could only be engaged in within a preexisting community that already realized those duties. Unlike moral duty, which confronts a world not yet in harmony with morality, the fulfillment of ethical duties reproduces the community within which ethical duty is alone operative. Moral duty involves no such relationship to a preexisting community that already embodies the fulfillment of that duty. The moral agent does not perform a role that reproduces the framework that is the basis for its engagement. Instead, moral duty is completely unsituated. It is pure in that sense of not being conditioned by any given determinate form of community.

Nevertheless moral duty involves spirit because it obliges individuals to engage in a universal activity that all ought to perform. Duty relates to them not in terms of a preexisting institutional framework that their membership obliges them to reproduce. Duty instead binds them to realize an ideal moral community whose realization remains an infinite task. What duty aims at is not something that contains the activity of its realization, as is the case of duty in ethical community. Rather, the fulfillment of pure duty would elimi-



nate the occasion for moral striving. The realization of morality must be put off indefinitely, for the actualization of morality would cut the ground out from under it.

On the other hand, however, this postponement does not require any holding back. The very achievement of morality is questionable because of the divide between nature and duty that moral consciousness presupposes.

It is important to see how the different postulates of moral consciousness are connected. In paragraph 604 Hegel begins describing the two postulates with which moral consciousness begins. One is the postulate of the harmony of morality and nature or objectivity, which could be regarded as the final purpose of the world from the standpoint of pure duty. This harmony is what the genuine essence of things should be. The lack of harmony between nature and moral duty is something inessential and not really true. What is genuinely true is this harmonization that is the ultimate end of what is.

The second postulate is the other required harmony between morality and the sensuous will. This harmony between pure duty and the sensible nature of the individual counts as the final purpose of self-consciousness. For consciousness to know itself as it truly should be, it must achieve this harmony on which morality depends.

As Hegel observes, there is a middle term that connects these two final purposes of the harmonization of duty and the world and the harmonization of morality and the sensuous will or sensibility. That middle term is moral action which brings them together and can only occur if it succeeds in so doing. These two final purposes are intrinsically connected by and in moral action, for only when these two harmonizations take place, can action be moral, that is, realize pure duty.

The unfolding consciousness of morality brings into play the principal features of Kant's account of morality and the dilemmas that this shape encounters have fatal consequences for Kantian ethics, which makes morality the basis of normative conduct. In paragraph 605, Hegel observes a further source of difficulty following from the contrast between the abstract universality of pure duty and the concrete actuality of the existing world and the sensibility of individuals. Due to this opposition, morality must contend with diverse cases and circumstances to which pure duty seems inapplicable without entailing a plurality of laws and duties. How can pure duty be actualized when the world is particular and morality enjoins something entirely universal? One can only act in the world as a living individual who engages in particular performances. How then can one bridge the gap between the universality of duty and the individuality of agency and its situation? Does there not have to be some way to diversify pure duty into particular duties? The moral subject, however, is obliged by pure duty and pure duty alone. It is therefore questionable whether moral consciousness has the resources for

providing any particularization or diversification of duties that actual conduct seems to require.

Paragraph 606 presents a possible remedy. Just as moral consciousness postulates the harmonization of pure duty with the world and the sensibility of the moral subject, so moral consciousness invokes another consciousness with the power to will the particular duties without which moral conduct cannot have any determinate reality. This perfect moral lawgiver can provide a necessary specification for moral conduct only insofar as within its privileged consciousness, the universal and the individual are utterly at one. This unity is precisely what is lacking in the moral subject, whose pure duty stands opposed to the world and the given nature of the individual. Whereas the moral consciousness confronts the problem of how to bring inner and outer nature into conformity with duty, the postulated perfect lawgiver has no such challenge. Its perfect will can sanctify particular duties that mediate between pure duty and the concrete conditions of conduct.

Still, as paragraphs 607 and 608 observe, the postulation of a perfect lawgiver does not remove the sensuous character of the moral agent, who cannot engage in conduct without having sensible inclinations and a particular embodied will. Even if the moral agent somehow has access to what particular duties are mandated by the perfect lawgiver, it remains questionable whether that agent can counter its own given impulses and conform to these specific imperatives. Duty, however particularized, still seems to fall outside the individual.

Once consciousness recognizes this abiding difficulty, it becomes aware that morality can only be actualized if the moral agent has the equivalent of a perfect, "holy" will that does conform to duty. This ideal moral agency must surmount two limitations facing the finite conscious agent. First of all, the knowledge of the acting individual is incomplete and contingent. The moral agent cannot know with any certainty the full nature of the situation it confronts, let alone know how other agents will decide to act. Second, the particular will of the moral agent is subject to inclinations of an equally contingent character. On both accounts, the moral agent is conditioned by given factors that render it anything but pure and "holy."

How then can duty still count for the moral consciousness, which cannot fail to experience its own imperfection and contingency? Consciousness can once more take flight to thought and represent to itself the idea of moral perfection achieved by a will of a different caliber that consciousness can still aspire to approach. The moral individual has experienced the disharmony between its consciousness of duty and its consciousness of the actuality of the world and its own living self. Consciousness knows that there is no self-consciousness of actual moral perfection to be had. In recognition of this absence of any actual achievement of duty, consciousness is left to represent morality as residing in a beyond, a beyond of a perfect moral agent unlike

ourselves that we can only emulate. As paragraph 613 observes, the experience of moral consciousness leaves it with this dual result: on the one hand, moral self-consciousness has no actuality and, on the other hand, the certainty of duty can only be retained by appeal to a transcendent perfect moral being that can serve at best as an ideal to be approximated.

This outcome will turn out to present consciousness with a series of dissemblances, where distinctions drawn between what is morally essential and inessential cannot be upheld.

## PART 2

The experience of the consciousness of pure duty has led to the postulation of a perfect moral consciousness to secure the actuality of morality. On the one hand, this idea provides for the determination of particular duties that bridge the gap between the formal universality of duty and the individuality of inner and outer nature. On the other hand, this idea represents an ideal fulfillment of duty toward which living individuals can strive without ever achieving an adequate consummation.

To validate its certainty, moral consciousness cannot renounce the universal nature of duty because the working assumption of morality is that one and all are bound by the same universal duty, which obliges us to achieve something determined by ourselves. Universality cannot be abandoned because it allows our common moral community to be unconditioned by inessential given contents, which cannot have validity either as displays of reason or realizations of spirit. To this end, the appeal to a transcendent perfect moral consciousness becomes a necessary safeguard, without which the actuality of universal duty cannot be tenable.

No mundane substitute can suffice. Consciousness has found natural ethical community, the empire of personhood, and the cultivated world of power and wealth all unable to realize universality in conjunction with individuality. From the moral point of view, no worldly authority can count, for any existing order has a given particular content opposed to pure duty. The moral consciousness cannot operate in terms of ethical community, where membership involves immediately identifying with norms already embodied in that regime. The moral individual knows itself to be bound by a duty that is independent of any particular institutional membership. That is why the moral point of view comes into play precisely in those situations where one does not belong to any institution that has legitimacy for one and where instead one has to fall back on one's own independent reflection.

Nonetheless, the commitment to universal moral duty cannot forestall contradiction with the given individuality of actuality, no matter which postulation consciousness may make. Hegel presents the general diagnosis of the

difficulty in paragraph 617. Consciousness will try to provide for morality by fixating on one side of the opposition or the other, but it will end up experiencing the unresolved contradiction, leaving the reality of moral action in doubt. Consciousness will be compelled to admit that it is not really serious about the distinctions it draws, for it discovers that it cannot maintain these distinctions.

Hegel first shows how this happens with regard to the first postulate of the harmony between nature and duty. This harmony has to be thought if consciousness is to regard morality as having any genuine reality, for otherwise, duty cannot be fulfilled in the world. Consciousness must hold to this hypothesis, but it equally must recognize that actuality is not in conformity with pure duty and that the whole point of taking moral action is to bridge the gap between nature and duty. Consciousness has pure duty precisely insofar as nature is indifferent to its realization. Nonetheless, harmony between nature and duty must be postulated because pure duty is what ought to be realized without qualification, and morality is the self-understanding that one attains a genuine reality only in fulfilling pure duty. In taking action, however, consciousness expresses through its deed that it is not serious about its postulate. If it really took the postulate of the harmony of duty and nature to be true, consciousness would not have any need to take action. Duty would already be realized. By engaging in conduct to fulfill duty, consciousness is thus showing that it considers the conformity of the world with duty not to be present, but to be something that can only result from the intervention of the moral agent. By taking moral action, consciousness thus denies its own postulate that there is harmony between duty and nature. Further, the acting individual leaves behind the purity of duty to give its conduct an actuality that involves the individuality lacking in the abstract universality of moral obligation. It thereby ratifies the gap that its own postulate denies.

A further dissemblance comes into play with the performance of moral action, which paragraph 619 observes. Actual conduct is always the individual work of an individual consciousness. As individual, the action is contingent in several respects. First of all, the action is contingent upon the particular impulses and intentions of that individual. Second, these impulses and intentions are themselves contingent upon the circumstances in which the agent acts. Moral action, however, is supposed to bring the good into being, which is not contingent or restricted, but the obligatory realization of pure duty. There is thus a discrepancy between the action in and through which morality is actualized and the fulfillment of duty. Moral consciousness thus experiences that pure duty obliges it to engage in an activity that cannot realize what it ought to do. One therefore cannot take seriously one's moral action.

A similar dissemblance occurs with regard to the idea of a highest good that is supposed to be the ultimate end in which duty and nature are united

and deserved happiness is achieved. By endorsing this idea of a highest good, consciousness shows once more that it is not really serious about morality. Moral action is concerned with transforming the world and realizing something that is not yet actual. If the highest good is really its ultimate end, then moral action subordinates itself to something whose realization makes morality superfluous. Instead of being action for its own sake, moral conduct becomes instrumental to a condition that eliminates duty.

A completely analogous conundrum results from moral consciousness's second postulate of the harmony between the individual's sensuous being and duty. Insofar as the natural embodiment of the agent is the necessary instrument for moral action's realization of duty, consciousness must hypothesize that its sensibility conforms to moral obligation. Still, no action can be taken without particular impulses and intentions. Pure duty requires that these sensuous particularities of the subject be overcome, but consciousness can hardly be serious about overcoming the subjective conditions for conduct. If, conversely, sensibility already conformed to duty, there would be no need to suppress inclination. Then, however, there would be no occasion to act so as to transform one's own inner nature, just as the postulate of the good and its harmony of duty and outer nature removes the occasion for acting to transform the world.

Alternately, consciousness faces equal dilemmas if it regards itself as being incapable of conforming to duty and views its moral engagement to be an endless, imperfect quest, where it forever trudges on the path of infinite moral progress. Once more, consciousness engages in dissemblance, acting in a way that undercuts its commitment to morality. On the one hand, the whole idea of infinite moral progress presumes that what lies ever beyond grasp, namely the perfect fulfillment of duty, would signify the cessation of morality. The moral quest, as an infinite moral progress, only operates so long as duty is never fulfilled. If that is the case, however, how can the moral quest and the very idea of moral progress be taken seriously? As infinite, the moral quest never actualizes duty. Can that quest then be considered moral at all? At best, one might hope that some progress toward a never attained goal could be achieved. Yet how can progress be measured if duty is never realized? For there to be moral progress presumes some standard by which to judge degrees of realization. Is the fulfillment of duty something that can be quantified? If it were, it would have an indifference to its qualitative determination. Moral duty, however, is pure and that purity excludes the indifferent diversity of magnitude. On the other hand, pure duty is no more amenable to qualitative distinctions of degrees of moral imperfection. Pure duty contains no particular differentiation from which any such qualitative ranking could be derived. Either way, one cannot take seriously the notion of moral progress or of any attempt to judge degrees of worthiness for happiness. All such distinctions collapse under scrutiny.

The postulation of a perfect moral legislator fares no better. Moral consciousness invokes this perfect moral legislator to sanction particular duties that it cannot otherwise derive from the abstract universality of pure duty. What, however, ensures that this postulated “holy” will has properly concretized duty so that finite individuals can actualize morality in the world? As paragraph 626 observes, the moment moral consciousness invokes a perfect moral legislator to guide its conduct, it acts heteronomously, following something other than pure duty. Consciousness accepts some other authority without establishing how the hypothesized perfect moral legislator can derive particular duties from pure duty. It cannot supply the needed derivation because the whole motive for invoking the perfect moral legislator is the inability of moral consciousness to derive diversified obligations from the abstract unity of pure duty. Consequently, moral consciousness cannot take seriously its own postulate of a “holy” will. The “holiness” of the perfect moral legislator can have no authority separate from that of pure duty, which alone comprises the essence of morality.

Moreover, the transcendent character of the perfect moral legislator leaves it beyond the realm of the realization of duty. Whatever it may be thought to dictate, its legislation has no moral reality apart from the activity of moral individuals. Since they remain burdened with inclinations that leave in question their unity with pure duty, the moral significance of the perfect moral legislator is further to be doubted.

In all these ways, the moral consciousness finds itself operating with postulates that cannot be maintained, engaging in quests that it cannot take seriously. As a consequence, moral consciousness is compelled through its own experience to abandon its initial moral worldview and retreat into itself as the locus for the realization of morality. It has come to realize that in truth the actuality of duty must be found in its own concrete individuality, for if duty is separated from that, morality has no reality. This retreat to one’s own actual conscious self gives rise to the shape of consciousness as conscience, which will bring morality to its ultimate limit.

### PART 3

Through consciousness’s own efforts to validate its certainty of pure duty, it has been forced to give up all the postulates of harmony and holy wills that failed to resolve the opposition of pure duty to an indifferent world and an indifferent individual nature in the agent. In so doing, consciousness has equally relinquished the defining distinctions on which its initial moral standpoint was based.

What we find ourselves observing is the shape of consciousness as conscience. What is conscience in distinction from the consciousness of pure duty and how does it emerge from the experience of the latter?

In paragraph 634, Hegel characterizes conscience in a way that highlights its departure from the oppositions that characterize the initial moral standpoint. In conscience, Hegel observes, moral self-consciousness overcomes and forsakes the division within itself out of which its various dissemblances arose. The experience of pure duty has shown the untenability of separating pure duty from the actuality of nature and the sensibility of the moral individual. As a consequence, consciousness now removes this untrue separation and in doing so the moral self returns to itself, finding in its own concrete being what is at one with duty. Moral consciousness thereby becomes conscience, a concrete moral spirit. Pure duty and nature, which formerly were opposed, are now combined into one within the individual moral subject. What we have, Hegel observes, is spirit as a self-actualizing moral essence, unifying duty with the immediate actuality of the individual agent, whose action is immediately moral. Although the actuality of morality is now to be found in the concrete individual, that individual is spirit insofar as conscience regards its own moral validity to deserve the respect of all other moral agents, whose respective consciences deserve to be honored in return. Conscience is a universal self-consciousness that is certain of finding what counts morally in its own individual conviction in precisely the same way that what counts morally is to be found in the individual conviction of others.

The problem earlier haunting the actualization of morality revolved around the difficulty of securing the harmony of duty with the individuality of the subject. Now, as conscience, consciousness knows itself to be moral in knowing itself as an individual aware of duty. Conscience no longer regards duty to be something separate from its own actual self-knowledge. Instead, it knows itself in all the particularity of its agency to be the essence of morality.

This does not signify an abandonment of the universality of duty. Rather, consciousness now has the certainty that universal duty must be at one with the individual self-knowledge of the actually acting individual. Conscientious individuals thereby act such that they take the truth of their action to reside in their understanding it to be something that they have determined to be moral. They take their conduct to be moral in virtue of their simply knowing it to be moral. In that way, they act with conscience, making appeal to their own immediate conviction that they are doing what is moral. In acting conscientiously, one's conduct is moral in virtue of doing it with conviction. The actuality of morality now amounts to acting out of conscience, which signifies nothing other than that one does what one knows to be moral in virtue of one's own immediate insight. As agents of conscience, individuals recognize one another to act morally so long as they act with the subjective conviction that their action is dutiful. In this way, conscience

overcomes the initial dilemma of the moral standpoint by removing the separation of duty from its individual realization.

The realization of morality no longer lies in a beyond, forever eluding the progress of individual effort. Instead, the attainment of duty lies in the actual concrete conduct of the individual, so long as it is accompanied by the conviction consisting in the individual's self-knowledge as moral, as doing something absolutely valid. This involves no appeal to any specific principles or laws supposedly derived from pure duty nor to any external standards. The conscientious individual appeals to its immediate conviction of its own morality, whose certainty does not depend upon the mediation of any independently given reasons. This immediate conviction applies directly to the action as a whole and it thereby renders the entire action with its accompanying conscience the valid realization of morality.

Conscience is not worried about coming up with determinate duties that its conduct should fulfill. None of this is needed, for what makes conduct moral for the conscientious individual is that it be performed with the conviction that it is moral. Conduct is moral simply insofar as one does it conscientiously. What particular content the action has is a matter of indifference. All that counts is that the action, whatever it be, is accompanied by the agent's self-understanding that it acts out of moral conviction. Even though conscience invokes the concrete individuality of the moral agent, it has a formality and this formality will prove to be of fateful importance.

Accordingly, the conscientious agent's knowledge of the circumstances of its conduct is not a problem impeding the actualization of morality. The moral subject does not have to know everything about the situation, for all that matters is that the agent's action be performed with the conviction of its moral value. This accompanying self-knowledge is really constitutive of the genuine actuality of morality.

The conviction of conscience therefore has no necessary relationship to any particular kind of activity. Does this mean that conscience can give its sanction to any action? The only limitation conscience faces is that it recognize conscientious conduct to be universally valid. As such, it is something that all individuals should be doing and to the extent that they act in this way, they deserve recognition as having acted morally.

It is important to remember that conscience is still a shape of consciousness as spirit even though it seems to be the most radically individualized way of validating conduct. Admittedly, when one acts conscientiously, one does not take one's cue from anyone else or from any secular institution or sacred authority. To be conscientious is to act in a situation where one has to decide what is moral based upon nothing other than one's own conviction. This is something completely subjective in character, yet it is invoked as if it were sufficient to determine a moral standing that is objectively binding. Such is the predicament one faces when one has to act on conscience. One



does not have any external rules or guidelines that count. Instead, one is thrown back upon one's own self-consciousness as the only factor left to decide what ought to be done.

There is, however, something else that is built into this situation of conscience. That is the self-understanding of oneself as spirit, as an I that is we and a we that is I. Conscience is a universal self-consciousness that is aware of itself in relation to others who view themselves as equally bound by their own conviction. What has to occur for this community of conscientious individuals to be and to enable individuals to interact in this way? Speech plays a key role as the appropriate and necessary vehicle by which conscientious individuals can communicate to one another the convictions with which they act. The conviction of conscience concerns what is of universal value in conduct and only speech can provide a suitably universal expression of such significance. Images and mute gestures will not suffice, but only discourse.

What kind of speech is required for individuals to make manifest that they act out of conviction and recognize the conscientious conduct of others? First of all, as Hegel observes, individuals have to make some public utterance assuring that they are acting conscientiously because there is no way one can determine whether someone else is acting out of conviction by just looking at their action. With the breakdown of the initial moral standpoint and recognition that morality resides in acting from conscience, one cannot tell whether an action is moral on the basis of any external description. Since what counts is the presence of conviction in the self-understanding of the agent, the morality of action cannot be determined apart from some communication of that inner conviction. The observation of self-consciousness has already revealed that nothing in the outer appearance of an agent can reliably express self-consciousness, whereas the "spiritual zoo" has shown that the works produced by action are no better at providing a manifestation of self-consciousness. A verbal assurance of conviction is necessary, yet can it be sufficient?

What does one have to say to indicate unequivocally that one is acting conscientiously? What is the necessary and sufficient content of the language of conscience? Hegel addresses this issue in paragraph 653. He describes conscience as being self-certain spirit that exists as such for others. The immediate action of conscientious selves is not what is valid and actual. What is valid is the conscientious agent knowing itself as such and being able to manifest itself as such for others. Without that expression to others, the subjective claim of conscience cannot receive objective recognition. Each conscientious agent may be certain that it realizes morality by acting out of conviction, but it must verbalize this certainty to others to count as conscientious for them.

In contrast to conscience, the moral consciousness that acts from pure duty remains silent. It does so, Hegel observes in paragraph 653, because it

remains in its interior separate from and at odds with duty. Verbalizing its own inner inclinations would only reveal the divide that puts in question its actualization of duty. For Kant, certifying to others that one acts from duty is virtually impossible. Since Kant considers objectivity to be a domain determined by efficient causality, he precludes the possibility of experiencing any one else as an agent. According to Kant's doctrine, all one can experience are conditioned events. Hence there is no way to observe others as agents and be in a position to judge their morality and otherwise interact with them in their capacity as agents. As Kierkegaard argues, accepting the basic parameters of the Kantian description of morality, there is really no way to determine whether anyone is acting morally or not. To decide whether anyone is acting out of duty it is necessary to observe their motivation and how they independently initiate their action, but neither can possibly be perceived. Hence, Kierkegaard concludes, in morality one can only deal with oneself.<sup>4</sup> One must retreat to one's self as the only redoubt of duty and realize that morality is a completely solitary, solipsist endeavor.

This might seem to resemble the move from consciousness of pure duty to conscience, but Kierkegaard's account lacks the element of spirit, of self-knowledge as a universal self-consciousness in relation to others. Can morality retain any sense if it is something solitary? Kant, of course, talks of duties to oneself, as if moral obligation could be just a solitary self-relation of the agent.<sup>5</sup> If one examines the content that Kant gives to the duties to oneself, they all turn out to prescribe behavior that enables the individual to act morally with respect to others. The "duties to oneself" end up having no independent standing of their own apart from one's duties to others.

The element of spirit in conscience comes to the fore in the imperative that conscience says something to vindicate its moral actuality. As Hegel observes in paragraph 653, consciousness must articulate its self-knowledge of itself as the essence of morality. This alone is what it needs to articulate and this articulation is the true moral actuality of its activity, which makes its action valid. Without the conviction, the action is not dutiful, and without the articulate communication of that conviction, the moral reality of its action has no recognized objectivity. Conscience must announce, "I am doing this from moral conviction" and others have to understand what this means.

Can it make sense to question the truth of anyone's verbal assurance that one is acting from conviction? As paragraph 654 observes, conviction lies immediately within the self-consciousness of the individual and only that individual has direct access to it. There are no other standards by which to judge the veracity of any expression of conviction other than what the conscientious individual chooses to say. That individual has the last word, and as such, cannot be impeached other than by him- or herself.

Still, one might think that there could be an inner intention that is not really revealed in the assurances of conscience, but remains separate from the

activity and speech of the conscientious individual. Hegel counters, noting that here in the shape of conscience we can no longer be looking for such oppositions.<sup>6</sup> It is too late to think that the willing of the individual could be separated from duty. That separation is precisely what conscience eliminates. What the conscientious individual does is equivalent to what is dutiful and the actuality of morality is precisely what the individual does knowing itself to be acting from conscience and professing that to other conscientious individuals. That is what it is to be a moral conscience. To state one's conviction, to state that one is doing something conscientiously, is what it is to act on conscience with respect to others. There is nothing more that can be asked for, because there is simply no other standard to which to appeal. Others must recognize this with regard to one's professions of conviction just as one must recognize this with respect to their own like assurances.

Even though the profession of acting from conscience cannot be questioned, the claim of each conscience to be a universal self-consciousness in a community of conscientious individuals raises implacable conflicts. Every conscience is certain that what it does out of conviction is universally valid, comprising the actuality of morality, of what truly counts. Each individual's conscience thereby determines what is good and everything that conflicts with its conviction counts as evil. Precisely because conscience's determination of what is good is completely rooted in its own individual self-consciousness of conviction, there can be no guarantee that what one conscience holds to be good will conform to what any other conscience does out of its conviction. The possibility of conflict places each conscience in a dilemma. If a conscience is to regard its own conviction seriously, it must judge any conflicting conscience to be evil. By standing in opposition to the conscience of others, however, the individual must recognize that it is failing to honor their right of conscience. If any conscience is to consistently recognize that its own conviction is a universal self-consciousness, it must accept the authority of what others do out of their own convictions. If conscience does this with respect to convictions that conflict with its own, it must recognize that others are committing good and it is committing evil. By judging this to be the case, however, the individual conscience contradicts its own certainty that what is good is determined by its own conviction. Consequently, every conscience finds itself in a situation where it must judge itself and everyone else to commit both good and evil. The experience of this dissolution of any firm distinction between good and evil puts the fundamental certainty of conscience in doubt.

The dilemma to which the experience of consciousness as conscience has led is rooted in the immediate unity of individuality and universality that was embraced as a remedy to the divide between pure duty and inner and outer nature. For conscience there are no moral principles that are given independently of its concrete individual self-awareness as an agent doing what it

regards to be good. Conscience regards the actuality of morality to be nothing but what it knows itself to be doing when it is acting conscientiously. At the same time, however, conscience recognizes that to be something universal requires that every other moral agent be accorded recognition as conscience. Conscience cannot be an engagement of one individual on an uninhabited island. Conscience intrinsically involves a relationship between moral individuals, all of whom are acting conscientiously with regard to one another. To do so, they must judge one another with respect to their verbal assurance of acting out of conviction. Given that they are independent individuals, with convictions that may conflict, they find themselves unable to judge the good and evil of one another without falling into contradiction. Insofar as there is no intrinsic connection between what one regards to be conscientious and any particular content of an action or any intrinsic connection between the convictions of different individuals, conflicts are always possible. To remain true to one's own conscience, one cannot regard conflicting conduct by others to be good. If, however, one regards conflicting conduct as evil, one is withdrawing recognition of the conscientiousness of the other agent. Conscience, however, is certain that conscientious conduct is something all should engage in. It is not a privilege but a common right and duty. Hence, every conscience finds itself before a dilemma: either one violates one's own convictions and honors the convictions of others or one remains true to one's own conscience and withdraws recognition of the conscience of others. Either way, the line between good and evil cannot be coherently upheld. Every conscience is faced with the prospect of finding that what it judges to be good it must just as readily judge to be evil. The internal logic of conscience thereby puts any firm distinction between good and evil in jeopardy.

### PART 3

What then can consciousness do to salvage its quest to know itself to be a universal self-consciousness for which objectivity is its own realization? Hegel turns our attention to what seems to be the most ready response. Consciousness, having experienced the impasse of conscience, gives expression to what it has discovered to be true. It does so by withdrawing from conscientious action and judging the conscience of others to be incapable of doing good as opposed to evil. This shape of consciousness is what Hegel calls a "beautiful soul" that secures an unimpeachable purity by withdrawing from moral action and critiquing those who do not.<sup>7</sup> The exclusive occupation of the beautiful soul is to judge the conscientious activities of others, exposing them for being evil, for not acting out of genuine conviction.

Through this critical activity, which proceeds entirely in speech, the beautiful soul regards itself as having an absolute significance, embodying the real truth of conscience. Something similar arose in the final stages of the shape of self-alienated spirit, where the disruptive consciousness also engaged in a language of critique, exposing the inability of cultivated individuals to maintain the distinction between good and bad in their involvements in the spheres of power and wealth. What are different are the respective objects of these withering deconstructions.

The beautiful soul regards its own self-knowledge to have just as absolute a character as the self-knowledge to which conscience lays claim. Moreover, like conscience, the beautiful soul engages in judging the good and evil of conscientious conduct. Further, like conscience, the beautiful soul does not acknowledge the authority of any independently given moral principles, customs, or institutions. All the beautiful soul regards to be of fundamental value is its own critical activity of judging the acts of conscience. It purports to be refraining from any conscientious activity of its own, withdrawing entirely from the domain of conduct. Nonetheless, it does take action, consisting in commenting critically on the conscientious activity of others. Moreover, it privileges its own activity as being of absolute value, independently of any positive external objective contents.

For these reasons, as Hegel observes, the beautiful soul appears as a hypocrite to those who it critiques.<sup>8</sup> It is judged by them to be hypocritical precisely because the beautiful soul does precisely what it accuses others of doing. It judges the conscientious actions of others by appeal to its own conviction and regards its own conviction to be absolute. In response to this critique of the beautiful soul by conscientious individuals, the beautiful soul has nothing to offer that can stand up to scrutiny. As much as the beautiful soul seeks to remove itself from the dilemmas of conscience, it finds itself drawn back into the same morass.

The experience of the failings of the beautiful soul leaves consciousness with a new certainty: that the oppositions of conscience cannot be escaped by withdrawing from conduct into critical speech. Instead, the oppositions of conscientious individuals can only be resolved if they somehow reconcile themselves to the inevitable conflicts that are endemic to conscience.

This truth is expressed in the shape of mutual forgiveness, which brings moral consciousness to closure. What is it exactly that is being forgiven in mutual forgiveness?

Conscientious individuals face each other in a condition where they are compelled by the internal logic of conscience to judge one another as evil as much as good. The hypocrisy of the beautiful soul has shown that one cannot walk away from this predicament. It must be resolved by those who do not withdraw from conduct. How then, can they retrieve certainty that their mutual practice provides them with an actualization of their universal self-con-

sciousness? They can do so by withdrawing not from conduct but from judging one another to be evil. They can thereby forgive one another for the evil they commit as well as for the judgments of evil they apply to their counterparts.

This acceptance of mutual forgiveness by all conscientious agents puts an end to the impasse of conscience. No longer is everyone caught in a predicament where they must judge those who act in opposition to the formers' conviction as being evil and these supposed evildoers must judge their accusers to be evil in turn. The reciprocity of conscientious evil-doers has been supplanted by the reciprocity of forgiveness.

Admittedly, when individuals forgive those they recognize to be evil they violate conscience. Does this mean that those who engage in mutual forgiveness are recognizing something else to have authority above and beyond the inner tribunal of conscience? Or are they simply following out the inevitable consequence of accepting the authority of conscience and taking seriously where it leads? Either way, those who engage in mutual forgiveness are leaving the standpoint of conscience behind to partake of a different relationship to one another.

Hegel presents mutual forgiveness as ushering in a shape of consciousness involving individuals knowing themselves in a new manner, which he will characterize as "absolute spirit."<sup>9</sup> This will still involve both reason and spirit, but now the I that is we and the we that is I will comprise a religious community. Although religious aspects have already been observed in the unhappy consciousness and in the faith of the Enlightenment, the shapes of religious consciousness that now await us will have something distinctly different about them.

To understand what arises from the final shape of consciousness as morality, we must explore how it can be that mutual forgiveness will entail something identifiable as absolute spirit and involve a religious community with a relationship to the divine. At face value, it is far from clear how anything transcendent emerges from reciprocal forgiving.

## NOTES

1. Hegel titles this section "C. Spirit that is certain of itself. Morality." See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, right before para. 596, p. 364.
2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 1, chap. 8, 1099a7–21, pp. 20–21.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 602, p. 366.
4. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 280–81, 284, 285, 287.
5. Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, in Immanuel Kant, *Ethical Theory* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983), pp. 82–111.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 654, p. 397.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 658, pp. 399–400, para. 668, p. 406.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 666, p. 405.

9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 671, pp. 408–9.





## Lecture 15

# From Natural Religion to Religion in the Form of Art

### PART 1

The preceding observation of the shapes of moral consciousness does not make any systematic claims about morality. Whatever claims come up are made by the standpoint under observation. We have simply followed the self-examination of the shapes of consciousness that are certain that truth resides in the self-consciousness of spirit.

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel systematically conceives the reality of freedom, having elsewhere established that self-determination is exclusively normatively valid. The *Philosophy of Right* accounts for morality as a distinct interaction of self-determination and conscience does play a role, even though it remains burdened by conflicts of conviction. Nonetheless, morality is presented as an inescapable mode of self-determination that provides the only normative option in those interstices of conduct where one cannot rely upon property right or the different spheres of ethical community to provide objective determinations of freedom. Hegel does suggest that the problems of conscience are surmounted by the structures of normative, rather than natural, ethical community. These normatively valid spheres of ethical community comprise household, social, and political institutions whose entire content consists in exercises of self-determination that reason can determine a priori. This puts them at odds with the contingently given institutions that communitarianism privileges, as well as with the extraneously given contents of a “natural” ethical community, such as those of an *oikos* and *polis*.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the self-examination of conscience leads to a different kind of resolution than that provided by normative ethical community in the *Philosophy of Right*. Since we left the shape of understand-

ing behind, we have been observing a knowing that is certain that its object is truly itself. Since we left the shape of the unhappy consciousness behind we have been following a knowing that is certain that truth lies in the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, allowing consciousness to know itself as rational and reason to be objective. Since we made our move into ethical community, we have further been observing a knowing that understands itself to be not just self-consciously rational, but to be spirit, a universal self-consciousness at home in its world. As spirit, consciousness is certain of the inter-subjective validity of its knowing insofar as it knows itself to be intrinsically related to other selves that share its character. Each of these successive developments has arisen to provide a revised certainty that can more adequately validate itself.

Now we stand on the threshold of the shapes of absolute spirit, which all include self-consciousness, reason, and spirit, but add something more. That new element is to be provided by the outcome of consciousness as morality. Let us follow the final moves that prepare the way.

In conscience, each self knows its self-knowledge to be determinative of what is essential. This is because that which counts as absolute, namely moral conduct, is determined through conscience entirely by how each individual knows itself to have acted out of conviction. Conscience has proven to be inherently problematic, however, because of the possible discrepancy between the convictions of individuals. Given the resources over which conscience disposes, only one solution to this impasse is available—that of mutual forgiveness, where each individual rescinds its judgment on the evil of its counterparts.

This mutual forgiveness provides passage from moral consciousness to a new form of the self-knowing of consciousness as spirit. This form removes the moral problem of distinguishing good and evil by enabling individuals to understand themselves in a different manner and thereby confront something else as what is essential.

Hegel points to what has newly emerged, noting at the end of paragraph 670 that the word of reconciliation is the existing spirit that immediately intuitively in its opposite the pure knowledge of itself as the universal essence. What is this opposite to which Hegel refers? Formerly, conscience faced as its opposite other conscientious agents who it judged to be evil. Now that all conscious selves forgive one another they confront in their erstwhile opponents confirmation of their certainty that they are what is universal and essential. In confronting those they forgive who forgive them in turn, conscious individuals encounter their self-knowledge in the others, who no longer judge any consciousness to be unlike themselves and who each consciousness no longer judges to be unlike itself. By forgiving one another, all accordingly confront in their opposite knowledge of themselves as universal and essential.

Their mutual forgiveness accomplishes two things. First, the reciprocity of forgiveness makes each individual confront an awareness equivalent to its own. Each is aware of the same thing in the same way. Further, by being aware of the other in the same way that the other is aware of them, they allow one another to reclaim the validity that the conflict of convictions called into question. The former accomplishment allows individuals to know themselves as universal, whereas the latter allows them to know themselves as essential.

In conscience individual self-knowledge was constitutive of what was essential, the actuality of morality. Here, as a result of mutual forgiveness, the self-knowledge that constitutes what is essential is no longer immediately individual but what Hegel describes as pure self-knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Pure self-knowledge, like pure consciousness, is pure insofar as it has a non-empirical, purely conceptual, universal content. To some degree, moral self-knowledge purported to be pure to the extent that it was self-conscious as a moral self in its consciousness of pure duty. Moral self-consciousness, was, however, always burdened by the conflict between inner and outer nature and pure duty or between the law of nature and the law of freedom. The nature of the external world and of one's own sensibility fell outside duty, whose actualization depended upon harmonizing nature and moral obligation. Now, through mutual forgiveness, the self's entire reality has been reconciled with its self-knowledge as universal and essential. Each individual now communes with itself in communing with every other self and each does so knowing itself to be universal and essential. Their pure self-knowledge is part and parcel of a reciprocal recognition that Hegel terms "absolute spirit."<sup>2</sup>

What is absolute about this reciprocal recognition that emerges from mutual forgiveness? If it were not absolute, it would be relative in some respect. Its reciprocal recognition would be contingent upon something alien. It would stand in relation to some otherness that it has not absorbed. The initial spiritual community of the ethical order was relative in that it had a natural, given content that conditioned its boundary, differentiation of spheres, and roles. Accordingly, one's self-knowledge as a member of natural ethical community was not pure but relative to one's nationality, kinship, and gender. By contrast the reciprocal recognition arising from mutual forgiveness does not determine its participants in terms of any natural differences or any other extraneous factors. They have a pure self-knowledge precisely because they interact independently of any of the given customs and roles of natural ethical community. In these respects, their spirit is absolute, not relative.

The section of the shapes of consciousness of religion will be developed under the heading of absolute spirit. They will also be characterized in terms of the self-consciousness of spirit.<sup>3</sup> The earlier shapes of consciousness as spirit were characterized as providing just the consciousness of spirit. In other words, in them, spirit was conscious of something other than itself, rather than being self-conscious, confronting just itself.

Absolute spirit and self-conscious spirit go together. Spirit has become absolute to the extent that it is not relative to anything other than itself. That is really just another way of saying that spirit is conscious of nothing but itself. Absolute spirit is thus a consciousness that is self-conscious, rational, and aware of itself as being universal and essential, sharing the same structure of awareness as others whose reciprocal recognition comprises what counts.

Absolute, self-conscious spirit may be universal and essential, but it retains plurality and the individuality required for the differentiation of particulars. The plurality of individuals is not overcome, but nothing in what individuates them relativizes their relationship or conditions what is essential. Convictions may differ, but their differences no longer count as determinative of what is valid. The differentiation of individuals has been absolved from undermining their self-knowledge being determinative of what is essential. Instead, they know themselves to have their true essence in this absolute spirit in which they participate, which comprises everything that is valid.

How then does the emergence of absolute, self-conscious spirit usher in the shapes of consciousness as religion? Hegel characterizes the absolute spirit arising from mutual forgiveness as being God appearing in the midst of those who have pure self-knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Although consciousness has pure self-knowledge in having this absolute self-conscious spirit as its object, what it confronts is still something distinguishable from individual consciousness. Consciousness is certain of its truth residing in absolute spirit, but its own relation to that object, its consciousness of absolute spirit, is different from what it therein confronts. The opposition of consciousness remains in force and the difference between knower and object gives absolute spirit a transcendent character with respect to consciousness.

This transcendent element is what renders absolute spirit something that consciousness represents as divine. It is divine by being both universal and essential as well as what consciousness is certain of being what truly is. It is also that by which consciousness has its pure self-knowledge for consciousness knows itself to be a universal essential consciousness through its relation to the absolute spirit confronting it as something beyond itself. This provides a route into the shapes of religious consciousness, where religion has the bare initial characterization of involving individuals who know themselves to have their essence in a transcendent absolute spirit. Our task is to observe what this religious consciousness is to begin with and how it develops into further particular forms.

Admittedly, what we have before us is a very formal way of thinking about religion as a conscious standpoint. Nonetheless, it must not be forgotten that each and every shape of religious consciousness is a shape of self-conscious spirit, which as such involves religious community. It comprises

an association of individuals with respect to what they take to be their absolute essence and which they distinguish from themselves.

A further key feature of the emergent shape of religious consciousness is that it *represents* rather than merely *conceives* the transcendent absolute spirit. Representation enters in because the object of which religious individuals are conscious is something that is beyond themselves even though they have their pure self-consciousness in being conscious of it. That element of transcendence brings in representation and non-conceptual content because if absolute spirit were given exhaustively in thought, it would no longer oppose consciousness as something beyond its knowing. For this reason, representation figures as the abiding vehicle with which the members of the religious community relate to that in which they have their true essence, that in which they can know themselves.

Representation has already made its appearance in connection with consciousness of the divine in the unhappy consciousness and the faith of the Enlightenment. Hegel goes to pains to distinguish how religious aspects have cropped up earlier from how religion figures in the shapes at hand. In the opening paragraphs of the "Religion" section, he briefly surveys all the earlier shapes in which religion seems to figure. These involve a consciousness of an absolute essence, but religion as it here enters in involves more than this. As Hegel points out in paragraph 673, what did not appear in the previous shapes was the pure self-consciousness of spirit that now figures so centrally.

Consciousness as understanding involved a supersensible absolute essence that was the truth of the dynamic relations of objects, but it did not comprise another self at all. Instead, it was formulated as law. Consequently, in being aware of that supersensible absolute essence, understanding could not be self-conscious of itself as spirit, but at best find its own cognitive activity behind the veil of appearances.

Similarly, the unhappy consciousness did deal with a beyond comprising an essential consciousness, but its unity with that beyond was not an object for it. The unity of the unessential and essential consciousnesses was never fully realized.

Although reason emerged as the truth of the unhappy consciousness, it contained no glimmerings of religion. Although consciousness as reason operated with certainty that what it confronted was at one with its self-consciousness, it began by looking for itself in the immediate present, rather than in any beyond. The element of transcendence was lacking.

The natural ethical world did provide a community whose members were conscious of themselves as spirit, as an I that is we and a we that is I. Moreover, one of its spheres, the household, followed a divine law. This might make one think that religion is already at hand, especially when we will find the natural ethical world figuring prominently in the second shape of religion, *Kunstreligion*, the religion of art. Nonetheless, Hegel maintains

that the appearance of divine law in natural ethical community is not religion proper, at least as it figures in the shapes of consciousness labeled "Religion." We will want to keep this in mind in observing the shape of the religion of art, *Kunstreligion*, which obviously rehearses much of the development of this natural ethical community. Natural ethical community may contain the consciousness of spirit, but even the presence of divine law in the household does not provide for the self-consciousness of spirit that is a constitutive feature of consciousness as religion. Symptomatic of this deficit is how the divine law stands in conflict with human law in natural ethical community. Neither law proves to be absolute and what their conflict reveals is that fate is the ultimate absolute ruling the world of natural ethical community. Fate is completely external to all parties concerned. It is something to which they have to submit. Awareness of fate is thus not awareness of the actualization of self-conscious spirit. Instead of comprising religion, awareness of fate ushers in consciousness of the empire of the abstract person of property ownership.

The battle of faith and insight in consciousness as Enlightenment does contain a religious attitude with a pure consciousness of what it takes to be absolute spiritual essence. Under the assault of pure insight, however, faith experienced its absolute to be empty. The actualization of self-conscious spirit instead lay in the here and now of utility. Whether construed as an empty receptacle of faith or as utility, what was held to be the absolute spiritual essence lacked a determinate self, preventing consciousness from experiencing the self-consciousness of spirit.

Morality was certain of the absolute essence of duty and invoked the divine to insure the harmonization of duty with inner and outer nature. The absolute essence of morality, however, remained enclosed within the individual self-consciousness. It never had any actual external reality that transcended the inwardness of the moral agent. Even when conscience made the concrete action of the conscientious individual the embodiment of morality, the conflict of convictions left that reality in question.

Consciousness as religion has certainty of an absolute spiritual essence that does not just remain within the self. The object of religious consciousness has a transcendent character and for that reason it is apprehended in the element of representation.

As paragraphs 677 and 678 observe, the consciousness of religion has two sides to it. On the one hand, it involves the self-consciousness of spirit, where individuals know themselves as an I that is we and a we that is I and comprehend objectivity to consist ultimately in the realization of this self-awareness. On the other hand, there is still a divide within the consciousness of religion. As Hegel puts it, the determinate being of the consciousness of spirit is distinct from its self-consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

The distinction of the consciousness of spirit from its self-consciousness is reflected in how the consciousness in question has an actuality that falls outside of religion. The religious community is not all-encompassing. Its members have a further life that is not swallowed up into their religious communion and this profane existence is endemic to religious consciousness.

By way of anticipation, Hegel notes the shapes of religion progressively develop so as to remove the discrepancies between the actuality of the consciousness of spirit and its self-consciousness.<sup>6</sup> The shapes of religion will come to an end when spirit that is conscious of itself becomes actual for itself as the sole object of its consciousness. We will have to see what this involves and why consciousness as religion moves in this direction.

Paragraph 683 gives a preview of what is to come, sketching out a provisional division of the shapes of religion. There are three basic shapes of religion, each of which gets elaborately described. This proliferation of detail raises the question of whether Hegel is supplying material that is merely illustrative of the three shapes, rather than necessarily ingredient in their specification. Much of this descriptive content appears to allude to all sorts of historical givens. On the other hand, the divisions are given a conceptual characterization that is putatively rooted in the self-examinations of consciousness from which they should emerge. Our task will be to follow out the inversions of consciousness that provide the motor of the development and distinguish what, if anything is extraneous.

The initial shape of consciousness as religion presents religion as immediate. Religion is spirit that knows itself as spirit and that is conscious of an absolute spiritual essence. To begin with, consciousness as religion knows itself as spirit in an object that is immediately at hand. That immediacy is given independently of the activity of spirit and thus has a natural character. So here the immediate being by which spirit is going to know itself in its truth is an absolute essence that is clothed in natural determinacy. That natural determinacy will take a variety of successive forms, but all will be expressions of one basic form of religious consciousness, natural religion (*die natürliche Religion*). The absolute essence has a natural character because it confronts religious consciousness as something given. Religious representation will here involve contents drawn from nature and these contents will pose difficulties not unlike those that faced consciousness as reason when it sought to find itself in what was immediately given in nature.

These difficulties will give rise to a second form of religious consciousness where spirit knows itself in an absolute essence that has the form of a worked over natural content, a mediated second nature that is produced by consciousness rather than being merely given. This comprises a religion of art or *Kunst-Religion*, which seeks the self-consciousness of spirit in consciousness of works that present the absolute essence.

One could look upon the reference to art in different ways. It might be thought of in terms of fine art as opposed to the artisanship of technique, especially when the final shape of nature religion involves given forms that are the products of an artisan, the *Werkmeister*. Hegel will distinguish the work of this artisan of nature religion by comparing it with the work of bees in building the cells of their beehive.<sup>7</sup> The artisan represented in nature religion falls within nature. In the religion of art, by contrast, we confront an artisan activity external to and exercised upon nature, self-consciously producing a representation in which one encounters the absolute essence and knows oneself in the pure way in which the religious community communes with itself. Accordingly, the religion of art enables spirit to know itself as being something not just given, but known to be engendered by consciousness, as a work of art exhibiting the imprint of the self. We will need to consider whether that means that the work can or must further be a product of creative, fine art.

The third form of religious consciousness, revealed religion (*die offenbare Religion*), is presented as overcoming the one-sidedness of the first two forms. Whereas the religion of nature represents the absolute essence as immediate or as a natural entity and the religion of art represents the absolute essence as posited or as an artifact, revealed religion will represent the absolute essence as involving immediacy and the activity of the self. Revealed religion will achieve this unification by construing the absolute spiritual essence in an actual self that has immediate being. In so doing, it will remove from the content of belief the last abiding difference between the object of consciousness and the self-consciousness of spirit.

The religious attitude of revealed religion thus presents the absolute essence in the form of a real individual, much like Christianity does with the doctrine of the Trinity, which represents the divine as being at one with itself in an actual human being, thanks to the crucifixion and resurrection. Once religious representation takes this form, the consciousness of religion will find that it can no longer uphold the constitutive divide on which religious transcendence rests.

It is important throughout the observation of the shapes of religious consciousness to keep in mind the difference between the form of representation and the form of thought, of conceptualization. Whenever the form of representation has come into play, it does so in regard to contents of awareness that cannot be fully grasped in concepts alone. Such contents are not simply particular and individual, for conceptual determination necessarily involves a particularization of the universal, which depends upon differentiated particulars or individuals. After all, thought determinations are themselves individuated and fall under higher universals as differentiated particulars. Rather, what distinguishes the contents that require representation is the kind of particularity and individuality they possess. Such content has a particularity



and individuality that is alien to the unity of the universal and does not fit within the inner differentiation common to the concept and self-consciousness. Thought can only deal with such content as something externally given, to which it can apply only a formal reflection that cannot differentiate that to which it relates. When consciousness confronts a content with that ineradicable facticity, it must forsake conceptualization and employ representation.

The difference between the self-consciousness of spirit and the consciousness of the absolute spiritual essence puts religious consciousness in the position of having to represent, rather than conceive, what it takes to be true. To the extent that this difference applies also to religion as such, it is indicative of why religious texts are not works of philosophy. Holy books may at times contain thinking that seems philosophical, but they necessarily are filled with representation, for what they have to present cannot be conveyed without narratives and images.

When, by contrast, thought lays hold exhaustively of the object of thought, it exhibits the unification of universality, particularity, and individuality that has been connected with the inner differentiation basic to self-consciousness and the self in general. Self-consciousness involves a division between its knowing and what it knows, yet it is a division that does not put the self in opposition to something alien to itself. Rather, it is just relating to itself. Even so, to be relating and to be in relation, it must involve differentiation, albeit internal to itself. The concept that exhaustively lays hold of the particular will be of that character, enabling reason to arrive at something new a priori, instead of having to depend upon content given by some other source, such as intuition or representation.

Accordingly, what will bring the shapes of religion to closure will be the point at which the absolute essence is so construed that it loses the last remain of alien content, allowing spirit to be self-conscious without having to confront something that requires representation. Not surprisingly, this overcoming of representation will be heralded by the form of religion that construes the absolute essence as a real individual, implicitly eliminating the aspect of transcendence. Here, to speak in terrestrial terms, God becomes not an anthropomorphic representation but an actual human being. This will bring religious consciousness to the point of undermining its own defining standpoint and the form of representation it entails. The removal of the form of representation will pave the way to the climax of the entire work, bringing the complete elimination of the opposition of consciousness, which ushers in the only possible terminus of *Phenomenology*.

## PART 2

Why then does religious consciousness first take shape as nature religion and what character does this form have? In paragraph 684 Hegel begins by noting that since spirit here is conscious of itself, it must exist for itself in the form of something objective. So even though religious consciousness involves self-consciousness of spirit, it also involves consciousness of the absolute spiritual essence and as such, the latter must confront religious consciousness as something given. Consciousness, as always, confronts the given, which, as immediately present is natural rather than posited or artificial or conventional.

Moreover, as paragraphs 685 and 686 observe, the absolute spiritual essence, as immediately given, is something sensuous, like the object of sense-certainty. To this extent, as Hegel notes, sense-certainty reenters in the initial form of religion.<sup>8</sup> Since, however, it pertains to the form in which the absolute spiritual essence is given, it is at best an element rather than an independent governing framework. Religious consciousness does not take what is to be the immediate given without further qualification. Rather, it takes its object to be an absolute spiritual essence that has the form of a sensuous given and also provides the self-consciousness of spirit. Consequently, although religious consciousness incorporates aspects of antecedent standpoints, we are hardly reverting back to sense-certainty or to any other earlier shape. Religious consciousness may begin with confronting the absolute spiritual essence in a sensuous guise, but it knows this to provide the self-understanding of spirit.

What religious consciousness immediately confronts is therefore not just a sensuous manifold. It is a more specific sensuous presence because it is charged by the certainty of religious consciousness with the task of manifesting the absolute essence in which individuals are going to know themselves in a pure manner as members of a religious community. To meet this requirement, Hegel identifies the initial sensuous configuration of the divine as a *Lichtwesen*, a luminous essence.<sup>9</sup>

This sensuous construal of the absolute spiritual essence resembles the God of Zoroastrianism and can be exemplified historically in all sorts of ways. It involves a very specific form of physical reality and one must ask why this particular natural shape should be given pride of place in the first shape of religious consciousness. The luminous essence casts light. It has darkness as its opposite. As the object of religious consciousness, it obviously is not just this physical reality. When religion worships something natural as the divine it is not taking that object just in its natural character. It is imbuing that specific natural presence with a very essential significance.

The luminous essence lights up everything. It pervades all unobstructed space and makes the visible manifest. In doing so, it does not appreciably

alter what it illuminates. For this reason, Hegel will speak about light in his philosophy of nature as having a physical ideality that pervades what is physical without actually physically transforming it.<sup>10</sup> Light has as its other darkness, which is equally indeterminate and thereby does not impose any specific limit upon the luminous essence. Light thereby retains a putatively infinite character, which is what matters when it is to serve as a natural representation of the divine.

In taking light as the representation of what is absolute, infinite, and the truth of self-conscious spirit, natural religion is doing something different from how the pre-Socratics made use of natural factors. From the days of Thales on, these thinkers took some physical entity and privileged it as being the ultimate principle of reality from which everything is composed. Religious consciousness goes beyond the aspirations of the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers in seizing upon something natural. For natural religion, light is not merely the principle of everything, but more importantly the absolute essence in which spirit is conscious of itself. This puts even greater demands upon the privileged natural factor than does ancient metaphysics. It is enough of a challenge to take a particular natural entity and derive everything else in nature from it, but it is something truly formidable to root something spiritual in character in something given by nature. Can the luminous essence or any other inanimate physical factor possibly provide what religious consciousness expects from it? Can individuals truly know themselves as purely universal selves in confronting an absolute essence in the shape of light?

The object of religious consciousness has to be something that is not only transcendent but something to which we have to relate ourselves to find our true essence. The farther removed from us the divine is construed to be, the more difficulty we will have in recognizing ourselves in its majesty. Generally speaking, religious consciousness will face a problem if it represents the divine as something natural while consciousness regards itself as spirit, a universal self-consciousness whose true essence consists in a spiritual, rather than natural identity. Natural factors will always be alien to that spiritual identity and at best can figure as a symbol or sign of something other than themselves. One can see that the validation of the certainty of religious consciousness contains an internal impulse to construe the divine more and more like we are if we have to relate to it to find our true essence.

Of course, the closer and closer to ourselves our religious consciousness construes the divine, the more the element of transcendence gets undercut and with it, the dependence on the form of representation. At the point when the absolute essence is construed as an actual finite individual, we confront ourselves so completely that God may appear to be dead. The only remaining difference is that we of the erstwhile religious community are still distinct from the individual human being who is represented to be at one with the divine.

At the outset of the experience of religious consciousness, we have a sensuous configuration that is alleged to be something absolute in which we are to find our true essence as self-conscious spirit. The light essence is the peculiar kind of natural entity that is as ideal as anything physical can be perceived to be. Empty space might be considered immaterial, but light is a sensuous immateriality that pervades everything and lords over everything. In the form of fire, the light essence heats everything up, generating the succession of physical states from solid to plasma, while flickering and constantly changing its own configuration. Light is not tied down to any particular shape, although it makes all shapes manifest. It thereby presents in physical form something like the inner differentiation of the conscious self, which is self-equal in all its representations.

Still, light, like any natural phenomenon is burdened with limits that pose a dilemma for religious representation. First of all, light is alien to us, for it is a sensuous factor lacking the non-physical reflexive ideality of self-consciousness. The light essence may illuminate everything visible, but it does not see what it lights, nor see itself. Second, light is finite. It is one among innumerable natural phenomena. How can it then have the supernatural absolute character ascribed to it, which clearly transcends what it is by nature?

The initial configuration of nature religion may present an immediately given sensuous factor with as ideal a physical presence as possible, yet it is devoid of life. It exhibits no self-sustaining selfhood. The consciousness of nature religion thus experiences that the light essence or, for that matter, any inanimate physical factor cannot be an adequate construal of the divine.

What is missing can better be found in natural form in living things. The life process exhibits something akin to an abiding subjectivity, a persisting self that is self-activating and self-preserving. Accordingly, natural religion turns from light to organisms.

The most elementary manifest life form, plant life, can better represent the absolute spiritual essence than light, for plants have their own self-sustaining metabolism and tropisms and reproductive process, all of which exhibit a minimal form of selfhood, however dispersed it may be. Aristotle sees fit to ascribe to plants a soul—a nutritive soul, at least.<sup>11</sup> Plants, however, provide, as Hegel observes, a most naïve construal for the representation of an absolute spiritual essence.<sup>12</sup> Lacking sensibility and irritability, plants have no centralized subjectivity that unites all sensitivities and responses into a unitary controlling self. The separate parts of plants have a purely local sensitivity to light and nutrients and react in the purely localized manner of tropisms. How can religious consciousness find the absolute essence of its pure self-consciousness in a natural shape so devoid of any real trace of mind? Nature religion may try worshipping plant forms as representations of the divine, but it must experience the inadequacy of this construal.

The absolute essence finds a more appropriate natural shape in animal life. Unlike a plant, an animal relates to itself as a single subjectivity in its apprehension and reaction to its world. Animals sense their environment and move themselves as a whole to satisfy their desires. They exhibit consciousness and a rudimentary, preverbal appetitive self-consciousness, even recognizing their own species being in favoring their kin. Nature religion can thus find in animal forms a representation of the absolute essence that falls on the threshold of spirit. It is no surprise, then, that animals have been worshipped by innumerable religions. Can, however, any animal representation provide what religious consciousness needs to validate its certainty?

Animals, like plants, are finite and mortal, which seems incongruous with an absolute essence. Religious consciousness can, of course, still represent its animal deities to be immortal, just as the ancient Greeks imagined their gods in immortal anthropomorphic form. Of course, it is questionable whether immortality has to be ascribed to the divine in all respects. After all, revealed religion will represent a God who dies.

Even immortality, however, will not remove a vexing problem afflicting any representation of the divine in animal, let alone plant, form. This is the irremovable truth that animals are particular and have a specific species. They are in conflict with one another in a biosphere that lords over them all. The whole course of evolution is testimony to the finitude of animal, as well as plant life.

Secondly, the selfhood of the brute animal has its own limit that challenges the aspirations of nature religion. Lacking linguistic intelligence, animals cannot know themselves as universal self-consciousness and recognize the law of a spiritual community. How then can religious consciousness find satisfaction in animal forms that preclude the kind of self in which truth is taken to reside?

The consciousness of nature religion cannot help but experience the inadequacy of construing the absolute spiritual essence in either the most ideal physical phenomenon or the forms of plant and brute animal life. Is there anything left in nature that can be employed by religious representation or must religious consciousness seek its truth beyond what is given in nature?

Hegel observes what follows in the next section of nature religion under the title "The Artisan" (*Der Werkmeister*). In the religion of the artisan, we observe a community worshipping things that are works of the artisan. They have a given being, but it is the mediated being of a product of making. Why would this construal of the divine fall within natural religion and not figure as a shape of the religion of art? Have we not left nature religion behind and turned to a religious consciousness that finds the absolute essence in art rather than nature?

The religious consciousness of the works of the artisan unfolds through a series of different types of artifacts. The work that first figures as the repre-

sensation of the absolute essence is something that is made by the artisan, informed by a subject, but not itself a subject. Of course, the work is not just a profane artifact, but a special product that is enlisted by the religious community to represent the absolute essence in relation to which spirit can be self-conscious. Here, the work of the artisan has a most minimal, abstract form that cannot simply mirror something found in nature. The work has a pure geometric shape that can be taken in by the understanding. Be it megalith, obelisk, or cube, this form confronts religious consciousness with something that is obviously made by an artisan. Although crystals might form such a shape as part of their expanding proliferation, this is not a crystal or a representation of a crystal. It stands on its own in its abstract isolation.

How does such a configuration convey the absolute spiritual essence and do so in a way that has any connection to nature religion? It presents something artificial, but what it presents lacks any of the activity that has brought it into being. Like the object of utility, the artifact of the religion of the artisan does not contain the subjectivity that is supposed to find its truth therein. The abstract work might symbolize something subjective lurking within, like the pyramids in which the pharaoh is entombed. Even then, however, the work contains nothing alive, but only a corpse in which vitality is just as extinguished as is the making in the product. We have something that is not natural, with a distinctly artificial form that should exhibit the truth of the self. The problem is that the presence of the self is just a representation. It does not have any actuality. If, however, the self lacks any actuality in the abstract work, can it really be thought of as having any absolute essence? In what way can it have any kind of substance or command over anything in any respect?

Religious consciousness can portray forms that give more direct indication of the self by turning back to organic forms for the shape of its sacred artifacts. Still, there remains something external to consciousness that frustrates the effort to provide an essential self-understanding of spirit. The same liabilities of actual animals carry over to their artificial representation.

A further option is possible for the religion of the artisan: worshipping artifacts that blend, as Hegel puts it, animal with human shapes.<sup>13</sup> Properly speaking, the blend should not be limited to animal and human shapes but more generally apply to a blend of brute animal and rational animal shapes. Rational animals need not be *homo sapiens*, although our terrestrial experience so far acquaints us with no other candidates for spirit. Nonetheless, there is nothing about the universal self-consciousness of spirit that precludes its realization in other rational species evolving in solar systems and galaxies far, far away. Keep in mind that whenever there is talk about the human in *Phenomenology*, it must be taken with a grain of salt. From the philosophical point of view, the role the human plays is not that of what is limited to the species being of *Homo sapiens* but extends rather to the finite rational agent

in general. In any event, on our lonely planet those who have religious consciousness of the artisan can mix the brute animal and the human shapes to try to represent the absolute essence. Whatever the mixture, however, we humans find ourselves encountering a divine form that has something alien to our spiritual self-understanding. The brute configuration must be expunged if the construal of the divine is to be adequate to the self-consciousness of spirit.

This leaves one final avenue for the religion of the artisan: to produce an artifact with the shape of a rational animal, such as a human being. Hegel refers to statuary columns in human shape as examples.<sup>14</sup> Can such an artifact truly present the divine to the religious community? The human form may be there, but it is given in a fixed, immobile representation, devoid of life and inner intelligence. The figure does not talk or act. It just displays the physical form of a being with self-consciousness without providing any actuality of self-consciousness. If this is God, it is a god in which we do not really encounter ourselves as spiritual beings, with a universal self-consciousness. We confront our own outer natural shape, but not our inward essential being.

All the options of the religion of the artisan have presented artificial objects, but all have relied upon natural forms of one sort or another. This was true of the most minimal, abstract work with which this form of religious consciousness began, for geometrical shapes are endemic to the nature of space. It was also true of the final artifact configuration, for the mute physical human figure is something we have by nature. Consequently, when this last shape exhausts the possibilities of the religion of the artisan, the consciousness of religion must leave nature behind, both in its given immediacy and in its artificial re-presentation.

### PART 3

Nature religion is followed by the religion of art, *die Kunst-Religion* and we must consider how the religion of art differs from the religion of the artisan and to what degree it arises from the experience of that final shape of nature religion. Hegel's observation of the consciousness of the religion of art is marked by two salient features.

First, the religion of art involves a religious community that belongs to a natural ethical order. We find Hegel's observation revisiting much of what appeared in the experience of natural ethical community. Indeed, the religion of art appears to comprise a religious consciousness of that ethical order. Why is that the case? And need the religion of art be associated with natural ethical community?

Second, although the religion of art presents the divine in non-natural products, these are distinguished from the works of the artisan in the final

stage of nature religion. What distinguishes the products of the religion of art is that they are not just mute configurations, but works enlivened with living discursive intelligence, either by serving as its enclosure and backdrop or by directly consisting in its actual performance.

The opening paragraph, 699, of the religion of art announces that the consciousness of religion has reached the point of dispensing with using natural things or inanimate constructions to represent the divine. Instead, religious representation will now employ something more directly connected with self-consciousness. No longer will there be any reliance on natural powers or on mixing human and alien forms or on the mute physical shape of rational agency. The work of the artisan who produced such representations of the divine is likened by Hegel to the instinctive operations of a bee building its cell.<sup>15</sup> Just as nature religion construed the divine initially in terms of immediately given nature, so its final shape as a religion of the artisan employed a purposive production that operated in a natural way. Now, however, the religion of art engages in a self-conscious activity, a distinctly spiritual labor.

What is so different about the activity employed in the religion of art? After all, the religion of the artisan did produce something artificial, something beyond immediate nature. The work of the artisan did not, however, present the actuality of self-consciousness and that is what now must be manifest if what consciousness confronts is to enable spirit to be self-conscious.

The religion of art is distinguished by its spiritual, self-conscious activity and we need to observe in what this consists. It is important not to reduce what is spiritual with what is self-conscious, although spirit does involve self-consciousness. The self-consciousness of spirit specifically involves individuals who know themselves to have a universal self-consciousness, one that qualifies them as an I that is we and a we that is I. If the religion of art produces religious representation with spiritual, self-conscious activity it should produce something specific to the community of individuals who know themselves to possess a common form of self-awareness. What then will the religion of art produce?

As we have noted, Hegel presents the religion of art in connection with natural ethical community and the works he observes this religious consciousness to produce resemble key cultural artifacts of ancient Greece. The connection should lie in how the religion of art worships in relation to things produced through a self-conscious, spiritual activity. The products of such activity are supposed to facilitate a consciousness of the absolute spiritual essence with which individuals can be self-conscious as spirit. We here have a form of religious community whose members have a universal self-understanding through representations of the divine produced by self-consciously spiritual activity. Is this the religious consciousness of individuals who be-



long to a natural ethical community? The answer to this question can be found by examining the different forms that the religion of art takes as a shape of consciousness.

To begin with, the religion of art produces as its first shape something that Hegel describes in paragraphs 705 and 706 as an abstract order of art that differentiates the individual and universal aspects of the absolute essence it conveys. On the one hand, there is an individual configuration, presenting the fixed outer shape of an anthropomorphic representation of the divine. On the other hand, there is an enclosure with a design specifiable in the universal parameters of inorganic geometric space, which provides the environment and habitation of the god and the place for worship. This abstractly universal habitat for the divine representation and its communal appreciation is, of course, a recipe for the classical Greek temple, which houses a statue of an anthropomorphic god in an abstractly geometric building stripped of other organic features. The design of the enclosure is explicitly removed from nature, yet is connected to a representation of the divine in the physiological shape of a human being. What kind of divine does a religious community encounter in this way and what satisfaction can it provide for the self-consciousness of spirit? Is the character of the divine as so housed and represented what members of a natural ethical community would take to be the absolute essence in which their spiritual being is to be found? The divine in question is represented in the physical shape of a natural being that is itself conscious, self-conscious, and rational. There is, at least on our lonely planet, a human form that has had all alien brute animality removed from it and presents the figure of a god.

This anthropomorphic god, like those of the ancient Greek pantheon, has a human shape but is not really human. As divine, the anthropomorphic god has a kind of universality that goes beyond the particularities of an individual human being. As configured in a particular human shape, it comprises the particular nature of one anthropomorphic god among others. This particular universal character might, as in the case of the Greek gods, contain some vestige of the natural powers of the gods of nature religion, whose overcoming by the religion of art is represented in classical myths of the defeat of the Titans. In any event, the particular human shapes of the anthropomorphic gods ties them to something given by nature, just as the unity of natural ethical community is tied to particular natural differences. Nonetheless, the anthropomorphic god must have something about it that makes it not just human, but the absolute spiritual essence. The fate of nature religion has already shown that what is given by nature is insufficient to convey that essence.

Although the representation of the divine in a human shape housed in a non-natural housing may escape the limitations of nature religion, it contains an inherent discrepancy that is wholly analogous to that afflicting natural

ethical community as a realization of spiritual essence. There remains an opposition between the anthropomorphic representation of the divine and those who make and relate to it. They cannot quite find themselves as a universal self-consciousness in what they confront. Although they have disengaged the representation of the divine from nature and given the divine the same bodily form as themselves, they cannot be conscious of themselves in this work. It is not fully human, both because the god is immortal and because its statue lacks actual self-consciousness. There is something distinct and alien about the anthropomorphic divinities. They are not quite individuals in the way in which each conscious self is an individual. They may be portrayed in a very human way, but they have some further feature that secures their identification as divine.

Natural ethical community aspires similarly to realize spiritual essence, whereby each member achieves universal self-consciousness as an I that is we and a we that is I. As we observed, the consciousness of its ethical order found that its privileging of particular natural differences conflicts with the universality of spiritual essence and undermines its own unity.

In the case of the first shape that the religion of art produces, the immediate obstacle to the self-consciousness of spirit is the static, inorganic reality of the representation of the divine. To retrieve the actuality of self-consciousness and put it at center stage, the religion of art must leave works of architecture and sculpture behind and turn to language as its medium of production.

In paragraphs 710 and 711 Hegel distinguishes two usages of languages that provide the religion of art with an immediate remedy to the shortcomings of geometrically housed sculpture as a means for representing the absolute spiritual essence. One is the hymn and the other is the oracle. The hymn utters praise to the divine, expressing in speech the devotion of individuals and the exalted character of their absolute spiritual essence. In partaking in hymns, the members of the religious community represent their connection to the divine, and by using speech to do so, they make themselves present individually as well as in a way united with others. The communicability of language makes it a medium of spirit in which, as Hegel notes time and again, the I and the we come directly together.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas the hymn gives individuals a way of expressing their common connection to the divine, the oracle is an individual who speaks to the religious community in the name of the divine. Insofar as the oracle is a particular individual, what the oracle says in the name of the divine is communicated in the particular voice of that person with all its contingent character. Moreover, the breaking into speech of the oracle is occasioned by particular circumstances. The oracle is the voice of the divine vis-à-vis contingent affairs that come to the attention of that spokesperson.

The hymn and the oracle thus mirror themselves in converse ways. Individuals speak their connection to the divine in hymns, which they utter as intermittent interruptions of their prosaic life with all its own interests. The oracle speaks the connection of the divine to the religious community in a particular individual voice, which intermittently interrupts its own silence and the mundane pursuits of itself and its audience. In both cases, the relation between individual, religious community, and the divine is mediated by the speech of individuals. That speech may combine I and we, but can either hymn or oracle provide an adequate actuality for the self-consciousness of spirit in the consciousness of the absolute spiritual essence?

The common problem of hymn and oracle is that both must presuppose the divide they seek to bridge. The hymn replays the same sort of difficulty that afflicted the unhappy consciousness in its devotion. The devotion of the unhappy consciousness was purely individual, locked into the feelings of the believer, whereas the hymn is spoken by members of a religious community. Nonetheless, both felt devotion and hymn remain within the reality of individuals, rather than bridging the divide between them and the divine. Consequently, the hymn cannot enable religious consciousness to find itself in the absolute spiritual essence as a universal self-consciousness. The hymn only confronts members of the religious community with their own speech, in abiding opposition to the divine they address.

The oracle presents a converse difficulty. The particularity and contingencies of its utterances stand in opposition to the absolute universal character that the divine is supposed to possess. Coming in and through a particular voice on the occasion of particular circumstances, the oracle confronts members of the religious community as, to paraphrase Hegel, an alien self-consciousness who speaks through an alien individual as well.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the priestly mediator confronted the unhappy consciousness with authoritative interpretations of divine commandment and prescribed an obedient behavior to unite the unessential consciousness with the essential consciousness. This priestly mediator directed its interpretation and edicts to the individual, who did not stand in any religious community or regard him- or herself as spirit. The unhappy consciousness was concerned with being in relation not to other selves but just to the transcendent divine. The oracle, unlike the priestly mediator, tells the religious community how certain contingent things will turn out thanks to the divine.

In both cases, the particularity of the mediating figure raises questions concerning its authority and adequacy as a conveyor of connection with the divine. The oracle is just a particular individual who claims to speak in the voice of the divine. Even with common recognition by the religious community, can what the particular individual says speaking in the name of the god be a sufficient, adequate representation of the divine? The oracle's pronouncements address contingent affairs that are occasioned by random

circumstances. If this is how individuals and the divine are linked, their relationship must be contingent as well. When religious consciousness experiences this contingency, it must reconsider where the truth of its certainty lies.

These experienced deficiencies are surmounted by the next development of the religion of art, which combines aspects of both hymn and oracle. This is what Hegel calls the “cult” (“*der Kultus*”) of the religion of art.<sup>18</sup> Like the hymn and oracle, the cult exhibits features that are foreshadowed in a more individual manner by the experience of the unhappy consciousness. Just as the individual unhappy consciousness sought to unite with the divine by engaging in practices of self-sacrifice and purification, so the cult consists in practices through which the members of the religious community together seek to relate to the absolute spiritual essence and achieve their self-consciousness as spirit. Once more acts of purification and self-sacrifice are followed, but now the aim and mode of activity reflects the difference between mere self-consciousness and the self-consciousness of spirit.

The self-sacrifice of the unhappy consciousness involved no mention of a cult precisely because it was a purely individual engagement aiming at achieving unity of the consciousness with the essential consciousness that was the outcome of skepticism. By contrast, the cult is a joint undertaking, where members of a religious community act together to serve their absolute spiritual essence so as to attain a universal self-consciousness. In the cult, we are observing religious consciousness as a cultural reality involving practices specific to a religious community, wherein individuals act in relation to other members as well as to the divine that they serve in common. This communal involvement similarly distinguishes the activity of the cult from the faith of the Enlightenment, whose pure consciousness of an ultimately indeterminate deity had no common religious practices to prescribe.

The focus of the cult is therefore no longer a matter of the individual expunging everything distinctly particular in its concerns. The cult can foster a positive feeling celebrating the common enjoyment of members of the religious community in serving their absolute spiritual essence. This common service of cult activity need not require any personal sacrifice of property and satisfaction on the part of its members. The unity of spirit includes both the individual and the universal. It does not involve the sacrifice of the individual at the altar of an abstract universal that does not contain the individual within its domain. Knowing oneself as spirit is to know oneself as an individual who is no less universal. Every form of religious consciousness charges itself with obtaining that self-knowledge as spirit through consciousness of the divine.

One’s self-knowledge as spirit is the core of what it means to be part of the religious community for within it, one’s relationship to the divine is some-

thing one shares with others. The cult makes this explicit for through it, one is conscious of the divine in engaging in communal observances.

Nonetheless, participation in cult activity has limits of its own that call into question its adequacy as an actualization of the self-consciousness of spirit through consciousness of the divine. Cult activity is distinguished from mundane affairs through observances that relate to sacred objects and “mysteries” that cult members keep to themselves. On both accounts, the cult relates to factors that pose a problem for the self-recognition of spirit. These factors conceal rather than reveal the unity of the divine with individual self-consciousness.

Hegel groups the cult with the temple, the hymn, and the oracle under the general heading of abstract works of art.<sup>19</sup> All are abstract in that their manifestations of spirit remain very incomplete representations of the reality of individuals. Although members of the religious community may visit the temple, utter hymns, listen to the oracle, and engage in cult activity, none of these engagements can encompass the actuality of individuals or of the divine. The next development of the religion of art is directed at overcoming this deficiency. What follows are a series of shapes that are characterized as living works of art. These living works of art have as their underlying mission something that arises directly as the outcome of the immersion in the cult.

In paragraph 723, Hegel introduces the living work of art as comprising a truth revealed to consciousness through its experience of the cult. What that experience reveals is something that the cult shows itself unable to provide. The cult consists in communal practices involving forms of discipline, devotion, and revelry, all of which are supposed to relate the members to the divine as universal self-conscious individuals. The problem with this is noted in paragraph 725. The cult just consists in the immersion of individuals in these common activities. It does not provide anything else that can stand over and against them as a divine reality transcending their cult practices.

The living work of art is intended to confront the religious community with a product that encompasses the whole essential activity of individuals together with the transcendent reality of the divine. The living work of art consists in acting individuals, cultivated so as to exhibit the free movement of spirit, liberated from the motionless being of statuary.

Most minimally, this might involve the cultivated physical development of athleticism or dance, offered as a performance representing something of divine significance. The mute physicality of individuals, however, is all too finite a representation, even if it exhibits every beauty and gesture that the silent moving body can display. Without words, universal self-consciousness cannot be made manifest, nor can any transcendence be unequivocally intimated.

The more proper field for the living work of art is literary performance. What Hegel proceeds to describe are the different genres of ancient Greek literature—namely classical epic, tragedy, and comedy. These might be considered mere literary forms with little to do with the actualization of religious community. Such is the case if one identifies them as pure literary genres, distinguished by their form of narration. Epic would then have no distinct religious content, but would be the literary form that employs third-person narration. Tragedy or more generally drama would then be the literary form that supplants third-person narrative with the actual speech of interacting characters. This leaves a final third form of literary narrative, that of lyric, which employs first-person narration. Distinguished by type of narration, such literary forms are specified independently of any connection to world-view and cultural self-understanding. It thus can be no surprise that these pure literary forms have been employed just as much by ancient Greek and Indian civilizations as by modern culture. The ancient epic has its modern counterpart in the novel, just as ancient tragedy and comedy have their contemporary exemplifications.

In *Phenomenology* what lies at stake is not literary form per se, but how religious consciousness enlists literary genres to validate its certainty that the self-consciousness of spirit lies in its consciousness of the divine. Accordingly, the literary forms here at play are all associated with the task of presenting an understanding of religious content to the religious community. It is in this respect that we must observe what is distinct about epic, tragedy, and comedy as shapes of religious consciousness. Then, we must examine if and how the experience of their representations leads to the consummating shape of religious consciousness, which Hegel presents under the heading of “Revealed Religion.”

## PART 4

The literary shapes of the religion of art begin with epic, follow with tragedy and conclude with comedy. Hegel’s discussion of these shapes makes use of examples from classical Greek literature, but we must keep in mind that these references can legitimately only be illustrative in function. What counts is that each of these forms figure as the vehicle whereby the religious community obtains its consciousness of the divine so as to achieve therein its self-consciousness as spirit.

As such, these literary works are not to be considered as accessories to religious practices that employ hymn, oracle, and cult. Rather, they here function independently as the living embodiments in which the divine is made available to the religious community and through which its members seek to understand their unity with the divine. The prime examples with

which Hegel illustrates these shapes of religious consciousness are the Homeric epics, the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and the comedies of Aristophanes. These may have subsequently been put to other uses, but for the ancient Greeks these works were prime sources of their religious representation. In any event, for phenomenological observation they play the role of exclusive representations of the divine to which the religious community turns its attention for the specific task of validating its certainty that the self-consciousness of spirit finds its objective confirmation in confronting the divine.

In considering the epic by way of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Hegel observes that what is at stake is not something limited to a particular ethical community, but something involving a more universal enterprise bringing together the particular Greek city states.<sup>20</sup> That enterprise is relevant to any human community that is trying to get at and uphold its true essence by enlisting the aid of deities that have the natural form of rational self-consciousness.

There is something problematic, however, about the whole enterprise of intermingling human and divine activities in epic conflict, just as there is something problematic about the situation of tragedy, where divine and human laws conflict, leading to the destruction of the tragic protagonists. In both cases, fate plays a role that is not just illustrative but endemic to this form of religious consciousness. In both cases, the role of fate revolves around the residual natural character that still impedes the full spiritualization of ethical community and its anthropomorphic deities.

In epic, as well as in tragedy and comedy, the divine is represented in the particular natural shape of human rational self-consciousness. This brings with it a certain finitude, despite the immortality accorded the gods. Insofar as they are particular and thereby one of many, they have boundaries and limitations that are manifest in their relations to one another as well as to mortals. Due to that finitude, they are subject to externalities, crystalized in the power of fate, which represents the whole process by which their limitations are exposed and displayed.

The resulting sway of fate over gods and mortals alike poses two daunting obstacles to spirit becoming conscious of itself as everything essential. What religious consciousness here confronts as the absolute spiritual essence proves to be insufficiently absolute. Moreover, the members of the religious community cannot be really at one with such deities. Although they have a human shape, they are not mortals. Their anthropomorphism only goes so far. When they intervene in human affairs, they still represent something external that is itself subject to the externalities of fate.

That fate is a blind power that is completely alien to spirit. So long as fate holds sway in the religious representation of epic and tragic conflict, individuals cannot validate themselves as confronting an objectivity that is just their

actuality as an I that is we and a we that is I. They confront instead a reality governed by something lacking their own self-conscious character.

Paragraph 747 observes how comedy leads the religion of art to its close by representing this very predicament. What comedy brings to corrosive comic relief is the finitude of everything held to be absolute and divine. In comic representation, the workings of fate are revealed to actually render what was taken to be absolute spiritual essence equivalent to finite self-consciousness. Comedy thereby enables the members of the religious community to find themselves in unity with the working of fate.

The irony of comedy provides the identification of self-conscious spirit with fate by bringing down to earth every supposed mark of transcendent immortality. By exposing the laughable character of all that is taken to be essential in the religious pantheon and in mortals' relations to their gods, irony shows the nullity of the very factors that separated the absolute spiritual essence from the religious community. The negative force of fate is accordingly experienced to be at one with universal self-consciousness, for nothing escapes reduction to actual finite self-consciousness. The anthropomorphic gods have lost their standing. Comic irony has made present the laughable situation of mortals and divinities who discover that what they take to be essential is really inessential. The spirit of comedy thus tears down whatever remaining substance there is to the religion of art. What consciousness now finds itself confronting is an absolute that is no less an actual mortal individual. In turning to this for confirmation of its self-awareness as a universal self-consciousness, consciousness takes shape as what Hegel calls "Revealed Religion" (*die offenbare Religion*).

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 671, p. 409.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 670, p. 408.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 677, p. 411.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 671, p. 409.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 678, p. 412.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 678, p. 412.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 691, p. 421.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 686, p. 419.
9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 686, p. 419.
10. Hegel, *Philosophy Nature*, paras. 275–76, pp. 87–91.
11. Aristotle, *On the Soul* in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 1, bk. 2, chap. 2, 413a26–413b6, p. 658; bk 2, chap. 3, 414a30–32, p. 659.
12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 689, p. 420.
13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 695, p. 423.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 695, p. 423.
15. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 691, p. 421.
16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 710, p. 430.
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 711, pp. 430–31.



18. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 714, p. 432.
19. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, heading before para. 705, p. 427.
20. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 729–30, pp. 440–41.



## *Lecture 16*

# Revealed Religion

### PART 1

Through the crucible of comic irony, consciousness has left the religion of art behind to take shape as what Hegel identifies as the final form of religious consciousness. Hegel characterizes this ultimate, consummate shape of religious consciousness in a twofold way, as absolute religion and as revealed religion.

The new shape comprises absolute religion insofar as it is the final culmination of religious consciousness, presenting the ultimate truth of religious experience. It presents that to which all the preceding forms have been driving. One principal way in which absolute religion does this, Hegel notes at the outset of this section, is by construing substance, the absolute, as subject, as something no longer distinguishable in its content from the knowing self.<sup>1</sup>

This consummate shape of religious experience is also called “revealed religion,” but not in the usual sense of the term. Revealed religion is ordinarily associated with revelation, whereby the divine makes itself manifest to humanity in some statement, some scripture that counts as the voice of god. Revelation may begin with a burning bush but it then moves on to something more permanently discursive, more explicitly textual.

Hegel has something different in mind. The identity of revealed religion here revolves around the same relation of substance and subject that underlies the alternate name of absolute religion. In the very opening paragraph 748 of the section, Hegel notes that through the religion of art, spirit has left the form of substance to enter that of the subject. In this context substance is the absolute essence that religious subjects distinguish from themselves in order to be objectively at one with themselves and one another. It has proven insufficient for that absolute essence to be construed in the natural form of a

rational self-conscious subject. Through the identification of self-consciousness with fate, the absolute essence has had to become an actual self-conscious individual rather than an anthropomorphic immortal.

As Hegel points out in the same paragraph, this development is a culmination of what has been occurring throughout the succession of shapes from natural religion through the comedy of the religion of art. The divine essence has been undergoing a progressive incarnation ever more approximating actual self-consciousness. The statuary columns of the artisan gave the divine its initial anthropomorphic form. Properly speaking, this initial incarnation is some fixed embodiment of the natural form of rational self-consciousness, whatever be the former's medium or the latter's species being. The embodiment could just as easily be an immobile hologram of a rational alien from a planet orbiting Alpha Centauri. What distinguishes this first incarnation is that it provides only the external physical shape of the self and not the actual self in its autonomous activity as an I that is we and a we that is I.

In the cult, consciousness confronted the actual activities of the members of the religious community who thereby related to external objects representing the substance of the divine. Due to this combination of joint activity and the veneration of holy objects, the cult did not present self-consciousness with just the universal realization of itself. Participation in the cult involved relating to things of sacred character incommensurate with the self. There are secrets to the cult because the divine is so construed that it has something occult and hidden about it. It is not transparent to religious consciousness because it still has a content distinct from individual self-consciousness. What will make religion revealed is the removal of this difference in content that keeps the divine in some degree of obscurity.

Once that removal does occur, religious consciousness confronts an absolute spiritual essence that has nothing to hide, precisely because it cannot help but reveal itself to the self-conscious individuals it resembles. With revealed religion, we have a religious consciousness that regards the self as the absolute essence, whereas formerly the divine substance was still distinguishable in content from the self.

Religious consciousness thereby appears to have validated itself as the self-consciousness of spirit. With the absolute spiritual essence no longer different in content from the individual self-consciousness, consciousness has nothing over and against it in the form of what is essential. Becoming purely self-conscious, spirit, Hegel observes, has thereby lost its form of consciousness.<sup>2</sup> Anything that could be said to be in itself, that could stand in opposition to the self, has been removed. Insofar as the divine has now become construed as the self, there is nothing of substance that can confront consciousness as something other to itself. For just this reason, the divine has lost all natural, given character. In other words, God has become spirit, a

pure absolute self-knowing mind. As such, god is transparent to spirit and spirit knows itself to be what is absolute.

As Hegel points out in paragraph 749, this proposition that the self is the absolute essence has already figured in non-religious actual spirit. A prime example is provided by moral consciousness. The morality of conscience was certain that the self-conscious self was the absolute essence. In conscience, consciousness took its self-knowledge as conscientious agent to be the actuality of the good, of what counted without qualification. Nonetheless, the possibility of conflict between particular consciences revealed that moral consciousness could not adequately unite universal and individual by allowing individual self-consciousness to be the final arbiter of conduct.

Revealed religion gives a different realization to the unity of self and absolute essence, in which each term acquires a content distinct from what they have in morality. Religious consciousness confronts consciousness with an absolute essence that has come to be an actual self-conscious individual. Whereas moral consciousness could only find in its own awareness the self that was united with the absolute, revealed religion offers that absolute self as an opposing independent being that consciousness can intuit. In revealed religion, what affords self-awareness to individuals is something they confront as a substance that is subject. As something confronting consciousness, this absolute essence in the form of the self has a given character.

The content of this given will become transformed in the development of the shapes of revealed religion, but throughout one thing remains a unifying thread. However the self that is substance gets construed as that in which spirit is self-consciousness as absolute essence, it is present to consciousness in the form of representation.

To clarify what is distinctive in the representations of revealed religion, Hegel contrasts how the self was identified with absolute essence in various secular shapes of consciousness.<sup>3</sup> The legal condition that arose from natural ethical community presented the person as what had absolute universally valid actuality. The person counts solely as an owner of property and everything else about the individual is rendered inessential. This formality of the person thus gives the self a very impoverished actuality, which Hegel compared to the abstract reflection of stoicism. Unlike stoicism, which is an attitude of the isolated individual, the legal condition is a spiritual, intersubjective relationship where property owners interact with others sharing in that status.

Hegel further refers to the unhappy consciousness in connection with comedy.<sup>4</sup> Both engage in something that serves to set up the transformation that we now confront. The unhappy consciousness involves a relation of the self to a divine that is transcendent. The unhappy conscious experiences the discrepancy between itself and the universal essential consciousness. By contrast, comedy destroys the substantiality of the divine and removes its

distinction from the self. Comic irony undercuts precisely those features of the divine that still are not united with the self. As Hegel notes, what we have is a loss of substance that can be expressed in the phrase, "God has died."<sup>5</sup>

The experience of comedy has exposed the finitude of the immortals and signaled the death of their pantheon. This has, however, a positive outcome as well. The God that dies is now the proper object of absolute religion. Only insofar as God dies is there God in truth, a god that can provide what religion all along has sought, a god that is actual self-consciousness, enabling consciousness to know itself to be a universal self-consciousness with which genuine objectivity is one.

This new consciousness of absolute religion arises out of two converse developments. On the one hand, the essential substance, which confronts religious consciousness as something transcendent, becomes emptied of its oppositional character and becomes self-conscious. On the other hand, self-consciousness undergoes a process of externalizing itself so that it becomes a universal self, allowing it to be at one with this absolute essence.

Both developments have to occur in order for religion to consummate itself. Religious consciousness aims at knowing itself to be in its individuality no less universal, that is, to be spirit. At the same time, religious consciousness aims at knowing the absolute essence to be at one with its self-knowledge as spirit. Only on these terms can consciousness certify the identity of its knowing with what is in itself. This requires that the members of the religious community somehow attain a self-awareness that is equally individual and universal and confront an absolute essence that is self-conscious spirit as well.

This dual development lies at the heart of what Hegel proceeds to observe under the dual rubric of absolute religion and revealed religion. What follows presents contents that obviously resemble what is historically realized in Christianity. The divine is construed as an absolute mind devoid of any natural character that is going to be a creator of nature including finite knowing selves. Further, the divine is construed to be the father of a son who will have a finite mortal mother. This actual individual will recognize himself and be recognized by others as being divine. Nonetheless, he will die and that death will be voluntarily accepted by this divine individual. Moreover, only in virtue of that death and the resurrection that follows will this actual self-conscious individual prove to be divine. Then, a religious community will arise that will represent all that has been described and relive it in the pious awareness of its members. In this way, the shape of revealed religion will present us with the very familiar features of that singular religion that takes the divine to be a human being. Do these features, so closely paralleling Christian religion, really follow from the internal logic of religious consciousness?

Our observation of revealed religion must see how all of this works itself out. The fundamental point of departure is the identification of the divine with the self, with an actual self-consciousness, which was what came to be the positive truth for consciousness as a result of the corrosive irony of comedy. From this starting point, we encounter talk of creation, of something like the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, of the Immaculate Conception, and of other intersections with Christian biblical narrative.

Let us begin with what Hegel himself identifies as the immediate consciousness of this absolute, revealed religion. In paragraph 758 Hegel presents the incarnation of the divine, which has given itself the shape of an actual self-consciousness. This incarnation is not merely a representation, carved in stone or portrayed in language and performed on stage. No, what consciousness immediately confronts in revealed religion is an actual person, present to the perceiver. The object of the religious consciousness of revealed religion is not something just conceived, represented, or produced. Unlike the object of natural religion and the religion of art, the object of revealed religion is God as sensuously intuited immediately as a self, an actual individual person, and only in virtue of that real living incarnation is the individual conscious of itself as spirit that is at one with the absolute.

The simple content of absolute, revealed religion is just this, paragraph 759 observes, the incarnation of the divine essence in an actual living, finite individual. That content does not require that the divine finite individual share our contingent *Homo sapien* species being. After all, we phenomenologists might find ourselves on some intergalactic outpost, observing rational agents of a different species being who could just as well illustrate the shape at hand. Whether the divine individual has earlobes or tentacles need make no difference to the phenomenological argument.

Whatever be its species being, the divine of revealed religion is an actual rational individual and Hegel insists that this type of incarnation is what makes religion a revealed religion. By construing the divine as an actual self-conscious individual, religious consciousness establishes as divine what cannot have any secrets or any obscurity for the religious individual. The divine cannot fail to reveal itself because it now has a nature no different from that of those who are conscious of their own true nature in knowing it.

Nonetheless, does consciousness of the incarnate god face the same problems that plagued reason as observation when it observed consciousness as its object? Do we not see the same difficulties arise when we stroll the halls of religious studies departments where scholars treat Jesus Christ as an historical individual and, by examining the historical data, try to discover something of genuine religious significance? If religious consciousness were just to take the standpoint of rational observation, then indeed it would face all the uncertainties that confront empirical study in general and empirical

psychology in particular. The inner life of self-consciousness always seems to elude what observed facts present.

Here, however, the difficulties are of a different, compounded nature. What is at stake is a religious relationship to an actual individual of whose existence and divinity one is certain. At the very beginning of the shapes of natural religion, religious consciousness confronted some natural factor, whose physical existence one could sense, perceive, and understand. Nonetheless, the natural factor was equally regarded to be divine and therefore to have more than just its sensuous properties. Something akin to that is at play here, except that instead of dealing with fire or a cat, consciousness is dealing with an actual self-consciousness as the divine. In this divine self we observe something having nothing esoteric or hidden about it. It speaks to us in the same manner as we communicate to one another.

We therefore intuit in it, as Hegel observes at the end of paragraph 759, the unity of divine nature with our own. We intuit it because it is given before us in the form of immediate being. Its immediate being, however, equally counts as an absolute essence having universal significance. For religious consciousness, this given individual is not just an immediately existing self-consciousness. As paragraph 761 observes, it is something both individual and universal, both subject and absolute substance.

How can this conjunction of individual and universal be comprehended by religious consciousness? It might be captured, as paragraph 762 notes, by an elevation of the determinate being of the divine individual into representation, which conjoins its individuality with universality. This move is, as Hegel points out in paragraph 762, analogous to how consciousness moves from sense-certainty to perception, transforming the sensuous given into a thing with properties, of which the thing is the universal substrate. What, however, would the equivalent universality be that could be associated with a divine individual who we hear and see?

We have the real existing individual and represent this individual as pervading all its properties like the thing of perception. Can this be sufficient for the task of religious consciousness? We sense, hear, and even touch the divine individual, illustrated by Jesus Christ, if we happen to be people living at that time. We can perceive the abiding identity of this individual as a thing with properties, or better, as a self that pervades all its own representations and actions. None of this, however, presents the further universal significance of the individual as divine. This other aspect is something we are just imagining, even though we have left behind the religion of art, where the incarnation of the divine is only imagined in statuary or literary creations.

Can this problem be overcome when we no longer encounter the living god in a contemporary intuited presence, but instead confront the divine individual as something of the past, inaccessible to any immediate intuition and only available in memory and received accounts? The remembered di-



vine individual is no less real, but we now know it within spirit, within the shared narratives of the religious community. Is this common remembrance and recognition sufficient for the awareness of revealed religion? The representation of the past involvements of deities in human affairs in the *Iliad* is something different because it is not literally an historical document in the way in which the narratives of the gospels are supposed to recount events that really happened. The gospels present a real divine self, delivered from the inadequate presence of an intuited individual to the form of representation, of re-presented intuitions, recollected in a written narrative. The object of revealed religion is now a common representation of a religious community whose members together recognize its universal truth as something both shared and occurring in the past.

The divine self is now present in this form of memory, in the way in which images and recollections acquire a kind of universality through a filtering detachment from the concrete immediacy of a single intuition. Still, as paragraph 764 recounts, debilitating limitations afflict this way of presenting the universal divine significance that the special actual individual is supposed to have. If religious consciousness is going to know itself to be both individual and universal in an absolute essence that it knows to be itself, what it knows to be itself has to be both universal and individual in a way in which there is nothing else. Only then will all reality be in truth the self-consciousness of spirit, fulfilling the epistemological quest of consciousness. The narrative of the past life of the divine self, however, leaves religious consciousness confronting something other than itself. The particularity of present intuition has been removed by putting the narrative of the divine individual into the remote past where it can be shared by all who want to represent it. Nonetheless, the narrative of past events remains bound to the sensuous, particular details of recollection. The reality and character of the divine self retains a singularity that leaves it caught amidst indifferently independent surroundings and distinctly different from the individuals who follow the gospels. The time and space of the gospels may be removed from our immediate intuitions, but it still can and must be pictured in a determinate location and era with particular protagonists. Even if the narrative is shared by all members of the religious community, it still retains the limitations of represented content that undercut a full unification of the divine self with each believer and all essential reality.

## PART 2

Throughout the unfolding development of the consciousness of revealed religion, Hegel repeatedly emphasizes that religious consciousness remains occupied with representations even though the divine is here construed as an

actual self-conscious individual. Because each shape of revealed religion involves representation, relationships that have a conceptually necessary character are clothed in contingent features.

How subject and substance become reconciled, how individuality and universality are connected, and how the self-consciousness of spirit could involve consciousness of a distinct absolute essence that is equally a real individual all get represented in a narrative with elements that cannot be derived conceptually because they are not just thought determinations but laden with imagery. This necessarily injects contingency and accident, which is why the narrative can be illustrated by the Christian gospels as well as by other possible religious texts with the same conceptual core of a god that is a real finite self.

Whatever its contingent pictorial content, revealed religion offers consciousness an absolute essence conceived as an actual self-consciousness and this poses a very specific challenge. The actual self-consciousness must be represented in a way adequate to unite its immediate being with the absolute, universal character of the divine. To this end, there is needed some narrative such as the passion and resurrection of Christ. The individual man who is god must die and be united with the supersensible transcendent dimension of the divine in order to secure the unity of subject and substance, of actual self-consciousness and absolute spiritual essence. So long as the individual self of the divine remains in its finite incarnation, no representation of its mundane activities can secure sufficient connection to that transcendent dimension. This proviso is the key to the Trinity, which invokes the death and supersensible rebirth of Christ to represent the unification of individual and absolute. Through death and resurrection, the contingent particularities of the divine self's actual existence are nullified and overcome. The discrepancy between the finite factual being of Christ and his absolute significance is removed.

Does, however, this represented unification of actual self-consciousness and the absolute divine also remove the difference between it and the members of the religious community? Christ or his analogue is an individual rational agent different from those who worship him. In being aware of this individual as someone different from themselves, can these individuals be aware of themselves in their unity with the divine? The religious consciousness of revealed religion operates with the certainty that we can find our self-awareness as spirit in consciousness of the divine actual self. Is this certainty validated in confronting the representation of the narrative of the passion and resurrection or its equivalent?

One might answer that we are self-aware in our awareness of the narrative of the Trinity because we happen to be human beings and we are encountering another human being (*Ecco homo!*) as opposed to some rational agent of a different species being. Moreover, the death of the actual self who is god

removes the finite individual presence that separates this being from ourselves as much as from the absolute significance it is supposed to have.

By now, however, it should be evident that this solution cannot suffice. The basic difficulty was illustrated in a minimal way when consciousness took shape as desire. The desiring consciousness sought to remove the difference between its object and itself by nullifying its existence, but that provided at best a very ephemeral self-consciousness. Obliterating the otherness of the object may have removed its particular existence, but it did not provide any positive objectivity for the self. Rather, the consumption of the desired object left consciousness confronting other objects in an abiding world, renewing the opposition from which the plight of desire issues. The death of the divine self has a similarly incomplete outcome, for religious consciousness has only removed the contingent particular being of this individual without securing an objective reconciliation between the divine and the members of the religious community. The representation of the resurrection may provide some consciousness of the absolute character of the divine individual, revealing him to be spirit in the sense of an individual that is just as much universal as also absolute spirit that is what is really essential in reality. The resurrection, however, like the death of the divine self, is an actual event, which is witnessed by those who find the empty tomb. It then slips into the past and is brought back to our consciousness as a narrated representation, like that of the recollected original incarnation. Once more the actual presence of the divine as divine is only to be found in representation.

The consciousness of revealed religion has a further resource to employ to save the actuality of the self-consciousness of spirit in an actual confrontation with the divine. This involves moving from representations of the Trinity to the sacred practices of the religious community.

The religious community confronts the incarnation, the passion, and the resurrection as represented in narrative histories. As such, what happens is full of contingencies. It is only because Christ resolved to allow himself to be sacrificed and crucified that all this occurred. On the other hand, there is a logic to how the divine cannot be infinite if it has a boundary, on the other side of which is the finite. The infinite cannot really be infinite if it has the finite outside it. The infinite must contain the finite within it and become finite without losing its own infinitude. Here, in the religious representation of the Trinity, we have something akin to this logical relation, but with something more at stake. The divine not only finitizes itself to uphold its infinity, but it also specifically becomes a finite self-consciousness. To overcome the limits of just representing this process, the religious community now takes the further step of reliving what is represented. It re-experiences the passion and the resurrection through observances like communion, where

individuals make that narrative something alive within the religious community's own shared practice.

These reenactments where each member of the religious community relives the unification of the divine self with the absolute essence comprise a final effort to do all that is possible for religious consciousness to validate its certainty of having our own truth as spirit in an absolute essence that is what we are. Here religious subjects aspire to make their own experience what they represent the divine to be. Although this seems to render consciousness at one with its object, Hegel proceeds to show how the opposition of consciousness has still not been overcome.

Admittedly, the object of revealed religion is itself self-conscious. It knows itself to be the absolute spiritual essence in which humanity has its truth and it relates to humanity explicitly in terms of this self-knowledge. Does it know itself as divine, however, through its awareness of the religious community? Would it have to in order for the experience of the members of the religious community to be equalized with the self-consciousness of the absolute spiritual essence?

It must be remembered that religious experience always employs the form of representation. This remains true when the religious community relives in its own experience the process of incarnation, passion, and resurrection, where the divine spiritual essence becomes an actual self-consciousness who dies and becomes united with the supersensible absolute. Representation is still in play because individuals know that they do not and cannot really be the human god who is born, sacrificed, and resurrected. They only *represent* that experience to themselves through communion, performing acts of symbolic significance. Representation maintains its hold, for the self-consciousness of spirit depends upon confronting something that cannot be reduced to thinking, whose internal differentiation is that of self-consciousness. Religious consciousness still knows itself as spirit only in being conscious of an absolute spirit that remains given to it. That element of facticity is what resists reduction to conceptualization.

Before considering the ultimate outcome of revealed religion, we need to consider aspects of the religious narrative that Hegel introduces after having observed how the incarnation is intuited and recollected. He brings in the representation of creation, which includes the creation of finite conscious individuals. He then recounts how these individuals are represented as undergoing a transformation from being in a state of innocence to one in which they are aware of the difference between good and evil.<sup>6</sup> What is the basis for all of this narrative? Peculiarly, Hegel introduces it after he has considered the experience of the incarnation, which appears backwards both in terms of religious narrative and from a conceptual point of view. The incarnation, the humanization of the divine for the religious community, obviously presupposes a world inhabited by individuals to whom the human god can appear.

Order aside, the real question is whether revealed religion needs a narrative of divine creation of the world. To conceive the absolute as an actual self-consciousness presupposes that there is a nature containing finite rational agents, but it is far from clear that nature has to be created. It is worth considering the alternative: there is God and there is a world and that world is not created but given independently in opposition to God. God then undergoes incarnation in that world and through death and resurrection upholds itself as a god who is not natural but spiritual. Of course, God's incarnation would be within a world governed by natural laws of its own, operating apart from what is divine. This might seem to put a damper on the infinitude of God. A created world, however, could also have its own laws and operate without divine intervention. Moreover, whether the world is created or not, God could conceivably engender miraculous things in it that violate the laws of nature, such as an immaculate conception and a resurrection.

On the other hand, if the divine is to be non-natural and truly absolute, it cannot be bound by anything wholly independent of itself. Whatever is finite must issue from the supersensible divine itself instead of confronting it as an external limit. This is true of a nature that follows its own laws. So long as it is created, its ensuing functioning is not a limitation upon the divine. Consequently, a narrative of divine creation is a consistent requirement for the divine to confront religious consciousness as the absolute spiritual essence. As religious consciousness comes increasingly to recognize that its own validation depends upon bridging the gap between itself and the divine, it becomes impelled to conceive the divine as less and less natural and more and more like spirit. The limits of nature must be overcome by the divine, just as ethical community and morality had to overcome the hold of nature in pursuit of self-legitimation.

In paragraph 769, Hegel notes how the conceptual imperative that calls for creation also bears upon the idea of incarnation. There cannot be an absolute essence that is abstract, that has no differentiation, that does not make itself other than itself. The absolute cannot be indeterminate without succumbing to nothingness and it cannot owe its determinacy to any source other than itself. Hence, the absolute essence must be self-differentiating. Creation is the process by which the absolute becomes other to itself. The incarnation is a further self-differentiation, satisfying the demands of religious consciousness and enabling the divine to be at one with itself in an adequate embodiment.

The process of incarnation has necessarily a natural dimension, reflected in the narrative of the Immaculate Conception. The incarnation occurs in nature and therefore it must fit within nature in some respect. On the other hand, the incarnation cannot just be a purely natural process, for it is the incarnation of the absolute spiritual essence. The narrative of incarnation must thus combine what is natural with what is non-natural or spirit. Concep-

tion that is “immaculate” does just this, representing a natural birth that occurs in virtue of the divine supersensible spirit, who becomes the father of the son of God.

Of course, it really does not matter whether the incarnation is male, female, hermaphrodite, something in between, or none of the above. The divine offspring has a natural embodiment and must exist in some form of a determinate species being reflecting natural reproduction. Natural reproduction itself can take different forms. It can occur asexually as well as sexually. The evolutionary advantages of sexual reproduction may tend to favor gendered rational agents, but ultimately, what form they take is contingent.

As for the “father,” natural differences have no proper scope, despite the imagery of Michelangelo and countless others. The divine as absolute spirit, distinct from creation and the “son,” is immaterial. It makes no sense to ascribe literally any gender or any other physical attribute to what might be thought of as having no name that distracts from absolute spiritual essence. The Greek anthropomorphic Gods can be legitimately ascribed every natural difference that applies to humans, but the god of revealed religion is another matter. Nonetheless, the divine, as object of religious consciousness, always has a facticity that must be represented. So somehow, what is supersensible in the god of revealed religion must be represented in imagery.

What about the other story of the first created humans being expelled from the Garden of Eden? Does this have any necessary role to play in the consciousness of revealed religion? Certainly, there is no way the content of religious representations can be necessary in any exhaustive manner. It cannot help but be contingent in its detail. Still, is there any rationale for the general drift of this particular narrative of the expulsion from “paradise”?

To some degree, this story is an account of how the religious community can be seen to emanate from the divine. It provides the basis for religious experience, for becoming conscious that one’s true essence lies in one’s relation to the divine. The narrative of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden represents a move from a state of innocence, which does not involve goodness, to one with an awareness of the difference between good and evil. A key consideration is how good and evil are characterized. Hegel addresses the religious representation of good and evil in paragraphs 775 through 777. Evil involves a way in which individuals oppose themselves, becoming aware of some kind of otherness within themselves. This is a very abstract characterization, tying evil not to any particular content but rather to a disparity within oneself. Something similar went on in the distinction of good and evil in conscience. There evil was whatever conflicted with conscience. Since conscience was free to consider any content moral, evil was a matter of disparity with conscience itself. The formality of good and evil for conscience was precisely what engendered the impasse whose resolution through forgiveness paved the way for religious consciousness. Here in the religious

representation of the expulsion from paradise, evil is characterized as an inward turn away from the beneficent relationship one had to the divine. That relation provided one's true essence, one's good. The awareness of good and evil is a matter of being aware of one's capacity to operate in either direction and to separate oneself from the divine. Once we are aware of this opposition, we then have an impetus to act with regard to the divine to breach the divide. In this way, the representation of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden provides the precondition for acting with faith, choosing to be good as opposed to evil, committing oneself to seek unity with the divine. Since evil is construed as being other to oneself, of being other to what one truly is, consciousness of good and evil can become a religious consciousness to unite with the divine to become what one truly is. Further, since the presumption is that achieving self-identity is good, there is something universally valid to one's self-identity. One regards oneself as spirit, as an I that is we and a we that is I. Moving from the state of innocence to the state of recognizing the disparity of evil and its difference from good is thus a matter of entering the normative domain of morality in which one knows oneself as spirit, as having universality, as having an ideal.

It thus can come as no surprise that something very similar to forgiveness enters into this religious representation with the appeal to love as something that can reconcile differences. The Christian narrative of forgiveness serves to parry the quandaries of conscience and lead to self-awareness as a religious individual having faith in an absolute spiritual essence. This is reflected in how the knowledge of good and evil that marks the departure from the state of innocence is not based upon any presentation of a tablet with divine commandments specifying determinate duties. It is instead a knowledge one has on one's own. Like conscience, it is a moral consciousness that is immediately subjective and not based upon apprehending any preordained particular laws. We are not yet in *Deuteronomy*, where laws are mandated and the believer's task is to apprehend them and make judicial pronouncements in their wake. Instead, we are recapitulating in religious representation something akin to the emergence of religious consciousness.

From these beginnings, the narrative of revealed religion can coherently proceed through the representations of incarnation, death and resurrection, and finally come to the reenactment by the religious community of the experience that these representations portray. What then does the religious community here finally achieve and what does it not accomplish?

Paragraph 784 observes how the narrative of sacrifice and resurrection has a divine man dying, removing the individuality of its natural being, with death providing a natural universality. Earlier Hegel had spoken of death in connection with the universality of the genus, where the death of a member of the species eliminates the individuality of that member but does not eliminate the species itself. The species maintains itself even as death removes

individual members from the scene. The death of the man who is god transfigures death in a spiritual way. We have on the one hand the resurrection and on the other the spiritual community living in its own religious communion a daily death and resurrection. The religious community itself engages thereby in experiencing the self-differentiation of absolute spirit. Here, Hegel observes, we have spirit knowing itself as spirit. In this reenacting religious community, individuals experience themselves to be a self that has absolute significance, that is, in a sense, all reality because the divine, the absolute essence, is just what the believer is, an individual who is also universal.

There remains a limitation, however, which will provide the reason for one last development in the self-examination of conscious knowing. It will engender what might be thought of as a further shape of consciousness, the shape to end all shapes. In paragraph 787, Hegel observes that the religious community has not reached the consummation it seeks. There is still some kind of estrangement, some kind of discrepancy between its self-knowledge as spirit and what it confronts as the absolute spiritual essence. Religious consciousness is still not able to validate its certainty.

The religious community does not really have a true consciousness of itself, even though it has a self-consciousness in what it is conscious of. It does not represent itself. Even when it reenacts in communion the incarnation, passion, and resurrection, the religious consciousness is not representing its own activity, but the history of a divine that becomes a real individual who is not literally the religious individual. To be conscious of the divine is to be conscious of something that retains some element of transcendence even if it takes the shape of an actual self-consciousness. This is why the religious community cannot worship its own activities but rather represents those of the god who has incarnated, sacrificed, and resurrected itself. The consciousness of revealed religion may recognize its own true essence as spirit in the god that is man, but it equally must acknowledge that the divine remains distinct from itself.

Revealed religion may represent a future reconciliation, after the last judgment, but that remains just as much a beyond as the divine itself. Once more, even when religious consciousness comes to the point of construing the divine so that it is an actual human being, it remains an absolute essence that carries with it an opposition where the self-consciousness of spirit still involves consciousness, still involves representation and confrontation with something given. This confirms what Hegel has emphasized throughout, that all the forms of religious consciousness involve representation, instead of a conceptual grasp of the object. What the religious community is conscious of is still different in some respect from its consciousness of itself, even if the content has become as equal as possible.

Although revealed religion has rendered the divine and the believer alike an actual self-consciousness that is universal and knows itself as spirit, the



divine still confronts religious consciousness as an independent given. What has to be done to eliminate that abiding element of opposition? The problem consists in the discrepancy between the consciousness and self-consciousness of spirit, between what the members of the religious community are conscious of and their consciousness of themselves. They are individuals who are aware of themselves as belonging to a religious community with others like themselves who know themselves as such in being conscious of the absolute spiritual essence. That absolute spiritual essence is also represented as a self-consciousness of spirit. Each is a knowing of knowing or a consciousness of consciousness in virtue of having as an object a universal self-consciousness. The knowing in question is self-conscious, certain of being rational and certain of being spirit. All of this provides the content of both self-consciousness and of consciousness. What separates the two is only a matter of form, the form of representation by which consciousness confronts something it still must distinguish from itself.

The consciousness of revealed religion ends up experiencing this discrepancy between its consciousness and its self-consciousness and how this discrepancy rests upon the continued presence of the form of representation. The validation of certainty requires the overcoming of this form. That is, the experience of revealed religion makes manifest that consciousness can obtain its truth only if the content of its consciousness and self-consciousness is no longer represented but conceived.

This imperative indicates why revealed religion is the final shape of religious consciousness. Because the experience of revealed religion requires the elimination of the form of representation, it demands leaving religious consciousness behind.

What, however, comprises the positive result of overcoming religious consciousness? Way back in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel pointed to absolute knowing as being the one possible end of the road for the science of consciousness of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Absolute knowing can be the end of the road because somehow or other it involves a consciousness that arises such that it can no longer distinguish between its object and its relating to the object. In other words, it no longer has any determinate opposition of consciousness.

Such a terminus thus has two sides to it. It is going to emerge as a shape of consciousness, but it will be one that undercuts not only itself but the whole framework of consciousness in general. It is going to undercut itself in a way that will be unlike the way every previous shape has undercut itself, leading to a further shape. This is because here the self-examination of this final shape will lead to not some further shape of consciousness but an elimination of the very opposition that made possible progress from one shape to another.

Hegel is now poised to present absolute knowing, the final shape of consciousness, as the outcome of the experience of revealed religion. Why is it that the end of our phenomenological road should loom before us only now that we have observed the sounding of the tocsin for religious consciousness and the form of representation? Why is the experience of the shapes of religious consciousness that which sets the stage for the removal of the entire opposition of consciousness?

In considering these questions, we must think about a problem that was raised at the very beginning of our investigation. Namely, did we really have to go through all of the preceding succession of shapes of consciousness to get to the final end of phenomenology? Could there have been some kind of shortcut? Of decisive importance in considering this question is how retrospective considerations of what went before figure in the workings of the final shape. If retrospective considerations do figure in it, this will be one sign that this final shape cannot be what it is without all that went before.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 748, p. 453.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 748, p. 453.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 753, pp. 455–56.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 752, p. 454.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 752, p. 455.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 774–75, pp. 467–68.

## *Lecture 17*

# Absolute Knowing

### PART 1

All the way back in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel sketched out how the problems of appealing to the given could not be remedied by turning to investigate knowing as first philosophy. Because the ontology of what is and foundational epistemology both remained stymied by presuppositions rendering their knowing suspect, the only option left was to take up knowing as an appearance, where phenomenal knowing was construed always to oppose an independently given object, always to have some foundation against which it has to measure its knowledge claims. Knowing as it appears was thus a knowing that had presuppositions, a knowing that was governed by the opposition of consciousness, where knowing confronts something given. To overcome foundations and the hold of presuppositions on knowing, the only non-dogmatic approach was to let the framework that presumes that cognition always has presuppositions to examine itself on its own terms.

There in the introduction Hegel also indicated the sole way to bring any closure to the observed development of the shapes of presuppositional knowing, of foundational knowing, of knowing burdened by the opposition of consciousness. That development could arrive at a culminating termination only when a shape of consciousness emerged in which certainty and truth became indistinguishable, in which there ceases to be any difference between knowing in its relation to what it knows and what it knows to be given. Only at that point, where there is no longer anything determinate that can be differentiated from knowing, does the motor of development cease to operate. This is because the motor of development, which led to successive inversions of consciousness, depends upon the experience of a discrepancy be-

tween certainty and truth, between the object as it is known and the object as it is taken to be given. What gave rise to a new shape of consciousness was the recognition that the object as known did not conform to what it was taken to be in itself, requiring knowing to revise its preconception of the given and relate to it in a correspondingly new manner.

This discrepancy, which we have seen experienced time and again, can only be overcome when knowing's relation to what it took to be given is either equalized with or rendered indistinguishable from what knowing regards to be what is in itself. Accordingly, the whole development of the shapes of consciousness, of the shapes of knowing that has a foundation or a presupposition or that confronts the given, can come to an end only when a shape of knowing arises that eliminates the opposition on which it and all previous shapes have rested, a shape in which for the first and last time certainty and truth become indistinguishable, removing the difference between knowing and its object.

Hegel provides in the introduction another formulation of this one and only terminus of the phenomenological development. He there speaks of the culminating shape of consciousness as an absolute knowing in which consciousness comes to know its own true essence.<sup>1</sup> He further speaks of this concluding self-knowledge in terms of spirit, characterizing this shape as one in which spirit comes to know itself in its proper configuration.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that consciousness knows itself in truth only as self-knowing spirit, which is why the *Phenomenology* would deserve to be called the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

There is an obvious connection between these two broad formulations. The first formulation presents the only possible terminus as one in which the opposition underlying the development is removed by the very working out of that opposition, carried on through the succession of shapes of consciousness. Insofar as the difference between knowing and what is known is eliminated, the object is the same as knowing. Thus, the knowing of this final shape knows nothing but itself. Precisely by overcoming the difference between certainty and truth, consciousness does know its own true essence or itself as what is in truth. Alternatively, to the extent that this shape involves consciousness as spirit, the equalization of knowing and its object is equivalent to spirit knowing itself in its proper shape.

The equivalence of the two formulations can, of course, be seen from the other end as well. When self-knowledge has been achieved in a thoroughly complete and adequate manner, so that objectivity is known by the self to be the self, certainty can no longer be distinguished from truth. This is because consciousness here experiences how its relation to the object, its knowing or certainty, is the same as the object, as what is given in itself, which is the truth of its knowing. One can say that the validated achievement of self-knowledge has freed knowing of the presumption that knowing always has a

given that it confronts or that knowing always has a foundation or that knowing always has a presupposition. Once consciousness knows its own true essence or spirit knows itself in its proper shape, knowing no longer confronts anything apart from or opposing itself. It has nothing left to confront or presuppose or treat as a juridical foundation, as well as no opportunity to experience its inability to validate its certainty.

Accordingly, what brings consciousness's path of recurring despair to an end is the kind of self-knowledge that eliminates the opposition underlying the whole enterprise of foundational epistemology and thereby removes the presumption that we need to distinguish knowing from its object.

The succession of shapes of consciousness that we have so far followed have been grouped together by Hegel in regard to certain thresholds or nodal points at which the opposition of consciousness becomes transformed in ways that get retained in successive shapes until a completely new relationship is established with its own variations to unfold.

First came consciousness pure and simple, which developed in three modalities: sense-certainty, perception, and understanding. As consciousness in general, presuppositional knowing began by addressing the given in its immediacy. This led to a shape that confronted the given as something mediated, exhibiting universality in a conditioned way, where the universal depends upon the negation of the sensuous given. Then came a further development where the given was understood to be not this conditioned universality, but the unconditioned universality that posits the differentiations to which it is connected. This new construal of the object then turned out to be something that could no longer be understood as anything other than the relating of knowing itself to its object. Thereby the development of consciousness came to the point where what it confronts cannot be anything other than itself. Consciousness, from here on out, must operate as self-consciousness in some respect.

One might think, Aha! Here we have the culmination we have been seeking. Here we have self-knowledge. Here we have no distinction between knowing and its object. The opposition of consciousness is removed. As consciousness itself discovered, however, having the self as an object does not yet remove the opposition. Self-consciousness is still consciousness, even though what confronts the self as an object is the self. Consequently, self-consciousness does not yet involve self-knowledge properly speaking. There is still a distinction between the self that relates to its object as being itself and what it finds given in doing so.

This discrepancy already brought into play the first rumors of spirit. If consciousness is going to have as its object the self, the opposition of consciousness entails that the self it confronts can have no positive presence unless it is *another* self. Self-consciousness will therefore have to involve relation to other selves, which will later figure under the heading of spirit

once consciousness grasps itself as an I that is we and a we that is I. Before that, however, consciousness experiences how relating to another self to be self-conscious has something problematic about it since the other self is not oneself. There is a difference between self-consciousness and consciousness of the self and the experience of this discrepancy impelled further shapes to confront the challenge of equalizing self-consciousness and consciousness. That challenge is implicit in being conscious of the self as something one opposes. As confronting consciousness, the self is another self. If consciousness of this other is to provide self-knowledge, then the two selves have to be somehow coincident.

That coincidence of the object and the self is what consciousness is certain of in arriving at the threshold of consciousness as reason. Here consciousness has as its object the category, wherein the self knows itself in what is other to it without qualification, in regard to all otherness. Under the banner of the category, consciousness henceforth takes this identity as what it confronts, enriching the scope of its putative self-knowledge. Still, just because consciousness is conscious of the category, of this identity of self-consciousness and consciousness, consciousness opposes this identity as something different than its relation to it. Once more certainty and truth remain distinct. The certainty that consciousness as reason has of finding the category in the given does not find validation in what it confronts. What consciousness takes to be an identity of itself with what is other is not equivalent to its relating to it. The given that confronts consciousness cannot adequately exhibit the category unless objectivity becomes a reality of consciousness that knows itself in its other, a reality of spirit.

Consciousness as spirit comprises the next threshold at which the self-examination of consciousness arrives. Like the prior nodal points in the succession of the shapes of consciousness, consciousness as spirit incorporates what went before. Just as the shapes of self-consciousness contained consciousness and those of reason contained them both, so the shapes of spirit involve consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason. This successive incorporation has important significance for the final shape of consciousness that now awaits our observation.

Hegel has frequently pointed out this incorporation of previous shapes of consciousness within their successors. At the beginning of the section of self-consciousness, Hegel mentions how the apprehension of what is as the self still operates with a sensing, a perceiving, and an understanding.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, when Hegel turned to observe consciousness of the category, he made little secret of how self-consciousness remained included.<sup>4</sup> When he described the emergence of consciousness as spirit, he observed that spirit is a totality that carries along with it these prior modes of consciousness.<sup>5</sup> Finally, when Hegel addresses consciousness as religion, the secular world of spirit is not

left behind. Religious consciousness still has alongside it consciousness of the mundane actuality in which the religious self is immersed.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout these developments, consciousness engages in various attempts to know what is given as something in which the self can recognize itself. Further, it seeks to recognize itself in a way that confirms its rationality, and then it tries to recognize itself as spirit, not only encountering itself in what is, but encountering its community with others as individuals who know themselves to be inherently universal, as an I that is we and a we that is I.

Hegel's observation of absolute knowing, the concluding shape of consciousness, begins by pointing to the abiding limitations of religious consciousness.<sup>7</sup> These remain in force even when religious consciousness comes to its own culmination in revealed religion, where the members of the religious community recognize themselves as spirit in confronting an absolute essence that takes the form of an actual individual with self-knowledge as spirit. The certainty of religious consciousness still cannot validate itself due to its own defining character. Hegel proceeds to point out the ways in which religious consciousness is incapable of verifying its certainty. In so doing, he indicates what is required to eliminate the shortcomings.

To pave the way for understanding these shortcomings and their remedy, it is worth following Hegel in noting how the limitations that afflict religious consciousness have already been overcome in a one-sided way in other parts of the development. In particular, something has occurred in the shapes of morality and conscience that would overcome the limitations of religious consciousness if it could be combined with what occurs in revealed religion. Accordingly, the lacking development necessary to surmount the shortcomings of religious consciousness is something that has already been implicitly accomplished and only needs to be recognized by consciousness in conjunction with what has emerged in the experience of revealed religion. If consciousness could do that, it would reach an understanding of itself that would overcome these shortcomings and thereby usher in the equalizations of certainty and truth and the proper self-understandings of consciousness and spirit with which absolute knowing has been identified.

At the very end of the observation of the experience of revealed religion we do not find anything presented that could readily be identified as the inversion of consciousness that generates the shape of absolute knowing. Instead, we find ourselves beginning the final chapter under a new heading, "Absolute Knowing" (*das absolute Wissen*), in anticipation of facing a new shape of consciousness that emerges from what went before, but which is going to be the last shape of consciousness. This means that although absolute knowing may begin as a shape of consciousness, it is going to undermine the opposition on which such knowing depends. Moreover, this final shape will do so by becoming what absolute knowing has been projected to be: a knowing in which self-knowledge is indeed achieved and

where the differentiation between knowing and its object or between certainty and truth is removed.

We are about to observe consciousness confronting something of which it is certain, which has arisen from an understanding of the shortcomings of religious consciousness brought to its thoroughly consistent culmination. The experience of revealed religion proved unable to validate its certainty, just as had every shape before it. What that experience revealed provides consciousness with its last insight as to what in truth opposes it. To the extent that we are about to observe the final shape of consciousness, we will be following a form of conscious knowing certain of what resolves the abiding problem. In being so certain, this shape will attain to a genuine self-knowledge that just as much eliminates the distinction between knowing and its object, overcoming the standpoint of consciousness in general.

What now follows proceeds in several stages. First, we observe the understanding of the shortcomings of religion, whose experience points to a provisional revised understanding of what is taken to be true. Then, in attempting to comprehend this truth, our observation engages in two separate “recollections,” each of which involves turning back to certain shapes of consciousness and revisiting certain developments that have taken place. These recollections do not just repeat these past developments but regard them in respect to what light they shed upon what must occur to overcome the limitations of religious self-consciousness. These retrospective considerations focus on certain nodal points in the argument, reconsidering them in light of the specific dilemma that has emerged in the final form of religious consciousness, revealed religion.

The two different recollections address two sides of the problem and both are compact, drawing upon a very limited number of shapes of consciousness. In considering these recollections, we should keep in mind that at the very end of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel speaks of three kinds of history.<sup>8</sup> The first kind is merely the empirical history of human ethical communities as they appear over time. The second kind is a remembered, constructed history, involving an exercise in representation. This is what most historical discourse commonly comprises. One appeals to the given historical record, reflects upon it, and then organizes it in various ways. In so doing, one applies thoughts to the historical record as one sees fit. Hegel lastly speaks of the third kind of history, which is more conceptual in character, having a certain necessity to it. At one juncture, he suggests that his might be the kind of history we find in the entire *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* has misled many into thinking that Hegel subscribes to an a priori descriptive theory of historical development. Such an a priori descriptive theory has been and deserves to be dismissed. It is noteworthy that all the great philosophers have attempted to conceive institutions of convention a priori only from a normative, prescriptive point of view.



They philosophize about what the family, society, and state should be, not about what these conventions are. They have recognized that convention is inherently arbitrary and that there can be no necessity to what does happen. What alone can be conceived a priori is what should happen and from Plato onwards, the great thinkers have only considered historical development in a philosophical manner after first conceiving what institutions should be. On that basis they have proceeded to conceive the normative history of what ought to happen for these institutions to come into being, or alternately, what would have to happen for these institutions to fall into decline. In just this way, Hegel takes up the history of freedom in his *Philosophy of Right* only after conceiving the institutions of right, of self-determination. These institutions of freedom provide the conceptually determinate goal of the normative history of what ought to occur. Since Hegel identifies normativity with self-determination, what ought to occur is the history of freedom. As he notes at the opening of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, we observe empirically that the institutions of freedom are beginning to arise in modern times. On the basis of this non-philosophical, empirical descriptive judgment, we can then look back over the given historical record and interpret it in light of the a priori normative history of what should occur. Thereby we represent what has happened as a history of freedom reaching its fulfillment in our time.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, *Phenomenology* has one and only one terminus, absolute knowing, in which the opposition of consciousness is overcome. Consequently, we can look back over the development of shapes that leads to this culmination and reconsider it as a “history” of the emergence of absolute knowing, which frees discourse from bondage to the foundational knowing of consciousness.

It is important, however, to recognize that the two recollections we observe are not “our contribution” but figure in the internal constitution of absolute knowing. They do so once the experience of revealed religion makes evident to consciousness that its truth lies in overcoming the form of representation that still saddles the true content of the absolute spiritual essence. They are available to consciousness to the extent that former shapes remain incorporated in those that follow.

Moreover, these recollections are not equivalent to a complete reconsideration of everything that has gone before in the annals of the experience of consciousness. We are not going to see the consciousness of absolute knowing here observe its own genesis in its entirety. Instead, the recollections will cover only what is needed to bring the opposition of consciousness to an end.

Let us then first look at the shortcomings of revealed religion that Hegel presents as a prelude to the recollections that follow. These shortcomings have different aspects, but these are quite intimately related. We commence with paragraph 788, the first paragraph of what can be called absolute knowing. Absolute knowing, *das absolute Wissen*, should not be considered abso-

lute knowledge, for absolute knowing ends up being not a determinate body of knowledge but a knowing that eliminates the structure of consciousness as the framework to which knowing is confined. Hegel here begins by noting that the spirit of revealed religion has not yet overcome its consciousness as such. He further observes that in revealed religion, the actual self-consciousness of religious consciousness is not the object of its consciousness.

These two points go hand in hand. So long as revealed religion has not overcome its consciousness as such, its actual self-consciousness is not the object of its consciousness. Conversely, so long as revealed religion does not have its actual self-consciousness for its object, its spirit remains confined to consciousness. In revealed religion the opposition of consciousness, of knowing and its object, is an opposition of the self-consciousness of spirit to its consciousness, its awareness of the absolute spiritual essence. That in which members of the religious community look to understand their own true essence is still something different from them. It may have the form of self-consciousness, being an actual self-consciousness, but it is at the same time the absolute essence and therefore not identical to their own purely mundane self-consciousness.

In the first instance, the absolute essence is the divine incarnation in a finite individual, who is not identical with the individuals of the religious community. They are distinct from that figure when they see, hear, and encounter it in the present. They remain distinct from it when they represent it as something of the past. And they are still distinct from it when they daily relive the passion and resurrection through communion and similar observances. In all of these cases, they distinguish themselves from something that has indeed become equivalent to spirit, to an I that is we, to a knowing that knows itself as both individual and universal and as not in principle confronting anything external to itself. The divine of revealed religion may have become a self-consciousness that knows itself as spirit, but it remains transcendent.

The divine has become something both individual and universal, but religious consciousness still does not find its own actual self-consciousness in what it confronts as its absolute essence. There is still a difference and still an opposition of consciousness. As Hegel observes, the abiding distinction between the divine and religious individuals signifies that religious consciousness has not overcome its consciousness and does not have as its object its own actual self-consciousness. This further signifies, Hegel adds, that what religious consciousness distinguishes in its knowing are contents that belong to representation and retain the form of objectlikeness, of "*Gegenständlichkeit*."

This German word should be noted because in his *Logic* Hegel employs a different term, "*Objektivität*," which denotes objectivity in the sense of that which is independent and self-subsisting, as opposed to the object that is a

“*Gegenstand*,” the object standing over and against the knower, the object to which consciousness relates. Objectlikeness or *Gegenständlichkeit* is what consciousness confronts. The contents of which religious consciousness is aware have the form of representation, which is to say that they have a form of objectlikeness, of opposing givenness. This is due to the fact that religious consciousness still has a form of consciousness insofar as its actual self-consciousness is not the object that it confronts. If its object or *Gegenstand* were no different from its actual self-consciousness, religious consciousness would no longer have the opposition of consciousness as such.

Representation presents a content that is confronted as something given. To represent a content is to be aware of something in the form of objectlikeness, of something distinguished from knowing. Hegel further characterizes the form of representation in contrast to the form of thought, the form of conceptualization. Representing is a way of apprehending something, no matter what its content may be, in the form of an object that one confronts as opposed to being something conceptualized. When one conceptualizes something, one puts it in the form of concepts. Hegel has associated the concept with the universal and with self-consciousness, ascribing to them all inner difference or self-differentiation. To the extent that the concept differentiates itself, pure conceptualization lays hold of something inherent in thought rather than opposing thought as something independently given. The form of representation, by contrast, takes up a content that is other to knowing and thereby must be given to rather than generated by knowing. The content of representation must thus be re-presented.

Throughout the discussion of religion, Hegel has been harping on how religious consciousness depends upon the form of representation to present its content. In revealed religion, the content of knowing has become adequate to the self-consciousness of spirit, but its form, as something represented, stamps it with an extraneous given character, opaque to conceptualization. The content still has some universality connected to it and, in the case of revealed religion, a universality tied to individuality. Nonetheless, there is what Hegel describes as a synthetic connection between the content and the universal. They are combined in an external manner, which means that one cannot deduce the content from the universal. The universal does not itself contain the particularizations involved. The representations may be general representations, but they also have a particularity that requires imagery to be conveyed. The universal significance of the absolute spiritual essence is tied to particular contents that cannot be derived from the concept of the divine and these must therefore be represented in narrative and pictorial form.

By contrast, thinking does not involve synthesis in the sense of connecting externally given factors. The unification of the universal proceeds in thought alone without confronting anything given. This suggests that a knowing that strictly confines itself to conceptualizing is not going to be

addressing opposing objects or "*Gegenständen*." Its objects will be immanent to thought and have the same self-determined character as thinking that is freed of the opposition of consciousness.

When Hegel discusses conceptualizing or conceptual knowing the German expression he uses is "*begreifende Wissen*." Talk of the concept first came to the fore in the move from consciousness to self-consciousness that followed from the experience of understanding. The concept came into play in conjunction with the infinite, life, inner difference, and self-consciousness itself. It involved an internal differentiation where there was a particularization that was not external to the unity that it retained. The concept was at one with itself in its differences and its differentiation was part and parcel of its own identity. Self-consciousness and the concept were connected in that both involve this internal differentiation. Self-consciousness has to involve an opposition to be consciousness of something. In self-consciousness, the self opposes itself. It thereby differentiates itself from itself, but it is no less united with what it differentiates. So this difference is an internal difference. It involves a relation, but it is a self-relation.

The unity of the concept and self-consciousness is now brought up again in connection with the shortcomings of religious consciousness. What is lacking in religious consciousness is consciousness of a content that completely exhibits the self-differentiating unity common to the concept and self-consciousness. Because the religious content is represented, what religious consciousness takes to be true cannot wholly conform to the self-consciousness of spirit. The content lacks an exhaustively conceptual character and must be clothed in the form of representation. If, however, that content were to be rid of its transcendent, extraneous given dimension, making it fit to be conceptualized, it would be like self-consciousness and the consciousness and self-consciousness of spirit could coincide.

In revealed religion, individuals come to know themselves with respect to a true essence that has become in content, but not in form, equivalent to them. In the absolute spiritual essence, they know themselves in a pure universal way as self-conscious spirit. No longer does one know one's spiritual character by occupying a role in an ethical community due to some natural difference. In the culmination of religious consciousness, one obtains a purified self-knowing that operates through non-natural factors with the one restriction of being present in the form of representation. The content of the pure spiritual essence is still distinguished from the consciousness that knows itself through that essence. That opposition prevents self-consciousness from being fully achieved, for self-consciousness and consciousness are still distinct and all this is reflected in the abiding form of representation.

What thus prevents the certainty of religious consciousness from validating itself is that it does not confront its own actual self-consciousness or, to put it conversely, its own actual self-consciousness has not externalized itself

to be what it confronts. This problem would be removed if representation were supplanted by an apprehension that does not apprehend anything foreign to itself, an apprehension for which anything different is its own differentiation and, in that sense, does not have the form of an alien and given object. This would allow for self-consciousness to be at hand without any residue of a consciousness that is different from it.

The terms of the one possible resolution are becoming clear in face of the interlocking dimensions of the difficulty. The problem in need of remedy is the continued presence of representation, which carries with it opposition to a given objectivity and failure to equalize the consciousness and self-consciousness of spirit. It should be remembered that the self-consciousness in need of equalization with consciousness is the self-knowing of a consciousness that knows itself already to be an I that is we, an I that is universal in character, even though it is this individual.

These considerations provide in at least a negative way some certainty of what would be required to achieve successful self-knowledge and eliminate the discrepancy between certainty and truth, between how one is relating to what one knows and what one knows, between one's actual self-consciousness (which here is how one relates to one's object) and what one confronts. The solution involves not only removing these differences, but overcoming the form of representation, the way in which the content of the object is united. The latter overcoming consists in moving from representation to conceptualization. Insofar as conceptualization thinks that which is inherent in its own universal unity, it does not lay hold of something that has an independent givenness. Instead, it provides a self-knowing that is "pure" in the sense of being completely conceptual in form. Consequently, the removal of any residue of representation is directly connected with eliminating the confrontation with something given.

These resolutions are not possible until consciousness has taken shape as spirit. Self-consciousness cannot operate without confronting something that is not the self unless self-consciousness is the self-consciousness of spirit. Self-consciousness without spirit is the self-awareness of an individual consciousness that does not know itself to be universal. It is just individual and as such it confronts other individuals and other factors different from it, leaving it opposing independent givens that cannot be resolved into its self-knowledge. That poses insuperable obstacles for consciousness to be genuinely self-conscious and validate its certainty that what it confronts is just itself. Consciousness can try the ploys of stoicism and skepticism, where it tries to overcome its own limited individuality by holding fast to the abstraction of thought that leaves out the individual, but it remains confronting the otherness of everything particular and individual.

Only when consciousness knows itself to be spirit can it know itself to be one of many who share the same form of knowing. This self-knowledge as

spirit is implicit in self-consciousness since to be conscious of the self is to be conscious of the self as an other. The consciousness of spirit provides for an object consisting in the mutual recognition of individuals by one another as an I that is we and as a we that is I.

Still, consciousness as spirit faces the problem of knowing objectivity in its entirety to consist in nothing other than the reality of the mutual recognition of self-conscious individuals. The ethical world may give spirit a present actuality, but it remains bound by natural factors that continue to haunt morality with extraneous factors that cannot be reduced to the self-knowledge of spirit. The attempts at cultivation by self-alienated spirit could not remove the gap between what is given and particular and what is to be made universal by cultivation, nor could the workings of the Enlightenment produce a world that was itself the self-consciousness of spirit. Absolute Freedom and Terror produced a universal work only by sacrificing individuality, whereas the outcome of the conflict of faith and pure insight was a reduction of objectivity to utility that still opposed its being put to use. Morality may have tied duty to self-knowledge as spirit, but the realization of duty still stood in opposition to nature, both inner and outer. Conscience made individual conviction what counts, but the conflict of particular convictions left consciousness unable to know all actuality as the confirmation of its self-knowledge as a universal self, as spirit.

Only religious consciousness of an absolute spiritual essence presents an object in which individuals can recognize all reality to be encompassed by the self-consciousness of spirit. What alone needs to be done is to remove the form of representation that renders that object still distinct from actual self-consciousness.

Hegel observes that insofar as revealed religion presents a true content in the deficient form of representation, that deficiency can be addressed by reconsidering how the basic modes of consciousness first rendered their object equivalent to the self. In paragraph 789, Hegel accordingly revisits the three different ways in which consciousness confronted an object expressly different from itself. To begin with, the object comprised some immediate being given to the immediate consciousness of sense-certainty. That object proved to be something mediated, just as did the consciousness that related to it. What resulted was the mediated object opposing the mediated knowing of perception. Then, the perceived thing and its properties reverted to a dynamic process in which conscious understood appearances to be determined by a supersensible law of forces. That, in turn, was experienced to be nothing other than the movement of consciousness itself, leaving consciousness confronting itself behind the veil of appearances. This development suggests that if consciousness is to eliminate the last obstacle to genuine self-knowledge and the unification of certainty and truth, it must know the object as itself by traversing anew the three construals that the object takes on in the move from

consciousness to self-consciousness: the object as immediate, the object as mediated, and the object as universal essence.

Accordingly, in the next paragraph, paragraph 790, Hegel runs through how these ways of determining the object determine it to be the self. If consciousness now applies these modes of reference to the true content of revealed religion, the absolute spiritual essence, will it succeed in removing the form of representation that stymies its quest for validation? One side of the problem will be addressed, namely the otherness of the object as it confronts self-conscious spirit.

There is another side, however, which must be equally tackled: how can the relating of knowing to the object become transformed so that the self is one that can successfully know itself as its object? Both sides must be resolved to remove the skeptical challenge to certainty that is still in hand. Consciousness must experience how the three aspects of the object can come to be transformed into the self as well as how the self can come to be the object.

How then can knowing, the relating of the self to its object, a relating that has come to be the self-consciousness of spirit, become its own object? The prerequisites for this final transformation have already been indicated. In order for the knowing of self-conscious spirit to be such that it can know the object to be itself, its knowing must move from representation to pure conceptualization. Then, knowing will unify its self-consciousness and its consciousness and eliminate the confrontation with the given.

Hegel tells us in paragraph 790 that the resources for accomplishing this transformation on the side of how knowing grasps its object can be found by recalling certain prior shapes of consciousness.

One must first revisit observing reason, because in observing reason we had consciousness making its first sally at conceptualizing the given, looking for the realization of the category in what immediately confronts it. Although observing reason addresses what is immediately given, it treats the given as exhibiting the concept, the inner difference of the self. In observing, consciousness as reason sought its own universal activity in what opposes it, but looking for itself in what is immediately given is bound to fail.

The fundamental difficulty is exposed in phrenology, to which Hegel next returns. Phrenology brings the whole enterprise of observing reason to its culminating impasse by finding the I in an immediate thing. Here a bone was taken to be the self, rendering knowing an object in the most blatant, rudimentary manner. This transformation of the self into an object may have externalized the I, but it gave it an embodiment incompatible with the inner difference of subjectivity, of the concept. Phrenology makes an “infinite judgment” that puts together two factors that are otherwise completely unrelated. It presents a realization of the I in a mere sensuous thing that is totally devoid of any activity of knowing, as well as any interaction of spirit.

A more appropriate object is that whose sensuous existence serves only to exhibit its being for the self that knows itself therein. Paragraph 791 revisits the shape of consciousness that provides such an object, namely the culmination of the Enlightenment, which reduces actuality to a non-transcendent sensuous being that counts merely as something useful for self-conscious spirit.

Although utility remains different from the activity of being put to use, it presents a development that moves knowing partly beyond the form of representation. It does so by undercutting the independence of the given, reducing it to an empty husk whose true significance lies in its purposiveness for our selves. In knowing objectivity to be merely useful, we relate to it in a manner in which what requires representation has been gutted of meaning.

What about the aspect of the object that has to do with what is inner, the essence? Hegel tells us that in moral self-consciousness the object as essence or what is in itself essential takes on the form of the self. From pure duty onward, moral self-consciousness regards what is immediately given to be unessential and considers the agent's self-knowledge as moral to be determinative of what counts as good. For morality, valid actuality is the realization of duty and that realization is determined by the knowing of the moral agent. To paraphrase Kant, the good will is what alone ultimately matters. The moral agent's own conviction is the final arbiter of true actuality, in contrast to the participants in natural ethical community, who know themselves as spirit by conforming to a role in a given community defined by natural differences.

As conscience brings home, what counts for moral subjects is simply what they individually know to count. What is universally essential is their individual knowing. This is taken to be objective, for morality is concerned with the good, which is objectively and not merely subjectively valid. The moral good is an objectivity that is determined by the subject by residing in the self-knowledge of the individual agent. As conscience, the subject knows itself to be acting out of conviction and that is what is essential. There is nothing else about conduct that makes it conscientious and gives it its value.

In recollecting observing reason, the Enlightenment, and morality, we have seen the three aspects of the object become identified with the self. Observing reason made the self into an immediate being, the Enlightenment tied the self to the mediated being of sensuous reality, and morality made the self into essential, inner objectivity. Hegel now tells us in paragraph 793 that these are the moments out of which the reconciliation of spirit with its own genuine consciousness composes itself. How does this reconciliation then occur?

Hegel points out that these moments or aspects of the object are individual.<sup>10</sup> They were encountered as individual shapes in separation from one another. Sense-certainty, perception, and understanding presented these as-



pects as determinations of the object as it opposes knowing, whereas observing reason, the Enlightenment, and morality presented these aspects of the object as determinations of the self. What provides for successful reconciliation of the self-consciousness and consciousness of spirit is that these aspects be combined to take care of all the different sides of the object that could make it something one is conscious of without being therein self-conscious. Taken together, they insure that the self knows itself to be the immediate being, the mediated existence, and the inner essentiality of the object.

This combination is not something that we need do. Rather, as Hegel points out, it is already present in the last of these aspects, which combines them all into itself.<sup>11</sup> This is manifest in the shape of conscience. How can this be, when observing reason finds itself in what is immediately given, the Enlightenment gives us a self that finds objectivity to be just its relation to it, and moral consciousness understands the essential to be how it knows itself? How can the latter incorporate the others that are distinguished from it?

Certainly on its own terms, conscience puts the essential actuality of conviction over and above the immediate and mediated dimensions of objectivity. The good trumps the expedient and what is by nature. Conscience lays hold of objectivity for the self in a way that goes beyond the limits of observing reason as well as of utility, removing any finality from those aspects. Conscience does not deny the immediate being that observing reason considers nor the mediated being that utility privileges, but it does lord over their domains and subordinate their aspects to the achievement of conscientious conduct. In this respect, conscience incorporates the immediacy and mediated being of the self as object in its own affirmation of self-knowledge as essential actuality.

## PART 2

If we now look back over the recollections that have been undertaken, we find the transformations necessary to achieve the required dual reconciliation of consciousness with self-consciousness. The features that characterize the object as something distinct from self-consciousness have been determined as the self and the features that characterize the self-knowing self as distinct from its object have been eliminated.

As Hegel observes in paragraph 794, this reconciliation has been brought about from two sides, from religious spirit on the one hand and from conscience on the other. As he explains, the reconciliation from religion took place on the side of being-in-itself, whereas the reconciliation from conscience took place on the side of being-for-self.

In religious consciousness, self-conscious spirit related to being-in-itself in the form of another self, the absolute spiritual essence. Through the emer-

gence of revealed religion, that absolute spiritual essence became an incarnated actual self-consciousness that knows itself as spirit. Religious individuals could now recognize themselves in this mortal god and discover being-in-itself to be self-conscious spirit like them. The transformed content of being-in-itself was the true content in that it allows for the reconciliation of self-consciousness and consciousness and the removal of the discrepancy between knowing and its object.

In the recollected shapes that culminated in conscience, what underwent transformation was the being-for-self of knowing, what knowing knew its own relating to the object to be. Although the revisiting of observing reason, the Enlightenment, and moral consciousness focused on how the object became determined as the self, this concerned not a being-in-itself confronting consciousness but rather how the self succeeds in making itself objective, in externalizing its own relating to the object.

Hegel is presenting these different movements as two different sides of the reconciliation. They take place on each of the two sides of the relationship of consciousness, one pertaining to the object as it is taken to be in-itself and the other pertaining to the relation that consciousness has to its object. Both sides have to undergo a certain transformation in order to remove the difference between them. This dual transformation can be spoken of in terms of a reconciliation of consciousness and self-consciousness because consciousness focuses upon being-in-itself whereas self-consciousness focuses upon being-for-self. When consciousness and self-consciousness are reconciled, that which confronts consciousness is no different from its self-knowing and being-in-itself is indistinguishable from being-for-self. That requires that self-knowledge or self-consciousness take a form that equally allows what is in-itself to be construed so that it can be equivalent to the knowing that knows itself.

As Hegel notes, the two recollections have so far been examined in a way in which they fall apart as separate movements. The religious consciousness characterizes what is in-itself such that there is a reconciliation in respect to content, but the abiding form of representation leaves a disparity between the consciousness and self-consciousness of spirit. Conscience completes a reconciliation in respect to the form of knowing, which knows itself to be essential being in its totality, but this reconciliation does not occur within what is in-itself. In each case, a unification takes place on one side only, with what occurs in revealed religion being the converse of what occurs in conscience.

In revealed religion, self-conscious spirit confronts the unity of itself and the divine that has become a finite subject. In the three shapes of observing reason, the Enlightenment, and conscience, the unification of knowing and its object takes place in how the subject relates to its object. The theorizing of reason, the treatment of objectivity as useful, and the appeal to conviction all

make the subject determinative of objectivity without objectivity itself uniting with self-knowing spirit. For this reason, these three shapes remain opposed to something in itself that does not quite fit the reconciliation they achieve in the domain of being-for-self, in the way one knows oneself. These three shapes involve something present in the activity of the subject, rather than in something opposing the subject. Even though consciousness may here be certain that there is nothing truly external or alien to itself, not everything has been drawn into its self-knowing activity. This activity retains a subjective dimension, in contrast to the objectivity of the absolute spiritual essence confronting religious consciousness.

The two recollections thus present two separate developments, distinct from one another, and taking place in different types of awareness. They have not yet been unified in a single shape of consciousness. Unless and until this occurs, the opposition of consciousness will not be overcome.

If there were to be such a unification, Hegel observes near the end of paragraph 794, it would be something in which consciousness as spirit knows itself not merely as it is in-itself or in terms of its absolute content, as it does in revealed religion. Nor will it be something in which consciousness as spirit knows itself merely in the contentless form that it exhibits in observing reason, Enlightenment pure insight, and conscience.

Rational observation, the dominion of utility, and conscience all have a formality where the imposition of meaning for the self leaves the objects otherwise untouched. Their content is a matter of indifference to their being observed, treated as useful, or included in conscientious conduct. If there were a unification of both sides, this would involve the reconciliation being apprehended in what is distinguished as being-in-itself and what is for consciousness, the dimension of its own relating. Only that dual unification will eliminate the abiding discrepancies. Herein lies the agenda for moving to absolute knowing.

To prepare the way, Hegel in paragraph 795 harks back to the beautiful soul, which came up at very end of morality, right before the conflict of consciences was resolved through mutual forgiveness. The beautiful soul judged other conscientious agents while refraining from any conscientious conduct of its own. In so doing, the beautiful soul regarded its own pure disengaged knowing and judging to be what is essential, while exposing the inability of conscientious action to distinguish itself from evil. Hegel here characterizes this pure judging of the beautiful soul as providing not merely an intuition of the divine such as religious consciousness affords, but the self-intuition of the divine. The beautiful soul is an absolute self-consciousness that sees its self-knowing to be determinative of everything essential while refraining from any kind of activity, any externalization, any involvement. In its self-immersion, it is akin to Aristotle's self-thinking thought, albeit still saddled with continued judgment of conscientious agents. Hegel seems to be

suggesting that the beautiful soul comes close to uniting the self-consciousness of spirit and consciousness of the absolute spiritual essence. Because, however, the beautiful soul refrains from any objective realization there is something one-sided about it. Not only can the beautiful soul provide no solution to the conflict of convictions, but it exhibits the same limitation that applies to morality in general. There is still a distinction between what moral self-consciousness provides and what might be regarded to be in-itself.

More must be furnished and to this end, Hegel, in paragraph 797, returns to the two sides of reconciliation to reconsider them with respect to the concept and the relation of substance and subject. He now suggests that the required dual reconciliation can be thought of as involving the subject becoming substance and substance becoming subject, which will also entail moving from the form of representation to conceptualization. Hegel begins by comparing the two opposing threads that need to be reconciled. What is the content in religious consciousness is the self's own activity in conscience. The content is the knowledge that the self's activity is within itself all essential being. This is knowledge of the subject as substance and of substance as the knowledge of its own activity.

Hegel associates the concept with this knowledge of the subject as substance and of the substance as self-knowing subject. He implies that representation cannot provide this knowledge and that only the concept can do the job. Why should this be so and what does this indicate about the move to absolute knowing? We need to consider what happens when the content is conceptualized without representation, that is, when the self-knowing subject that is substance knows itself by conceiving, rather than representing, its own content.

Substance here refers to what is in itself, what is the independent totality opposing the knowing subject. The dual reconciliation entails that the object that self-knowledge confronts allow it to be conscious of itself. If it is to enable that it must also take the form of self-knowledge, because only if it is self-knowledge is the knowledge of self-knowledge confronting itself. By the same token, self-knowledge must make itself its own object, so that the object is not something external to it. In these senses, substance must be subject and subject must be substance. Given how representation involves a residual confrontation with something given, whereas conceptualization involves inner differentiation, the self-knowing subject that is substance can only be what is in itself without remain if its self-knowledge is conceptual, rather than burdened by represented imagery of the given. Representation is always external to what it represents, whereas conceptualization is intrinsically connected to what it purely conceives.

With these considerations in hand, we come, finally, in paragraph 798, face to face with absolute knowing. Hegel here identifies absolute knowing in several ways and we need to consider how these characterizations fit

together and how they accommodate the dual reconciliations that have been portrayed.

First of all, absolute knowing is identified as the last shape of spirit, the shape that gives to spirit's complete and true content the form of the self.<sup>12</sup> In doing that, absolute knowing realizes spirit's true concept, insofar as within this actualization spirit persists within its concept, knowing itself as it is in truth.

Secondly, Hegel characterizes absolute knowing as spirit knowing itself in the shape of spirit.<sup>13</sup> These two characterizations put several things together at the same time—spirit knowing itself in the shape of spirit, spirit that gives its true content the form of the self, and spirit that realizes its concept.

Why would spirit that knows itself in the shape of spirit also realize its concept and remain in its concept? This follows insofar as spirit that knows itself in the shape of spirit does so not by employing the form of representation, but the form of thought. In other words, spirit would know itself in its proper shape by engaging not in representing but in conceptualizing itself. Here spirit, universal self-consciousness, the I that is we and the we that is I, appears in the element of conceptual self-knowledge because only in that element does it know itself in the shape of itself rather than in something other.

At this juncture Hegel applies a further term to absolute knowing. He refers to it as being science, *Wissenschaft*.<sup>14</sup> How are we to understand this characterization? Does it mean that absolute knowing comprises a body of systematic knowledge, falling within the limits of the self-knowledge of spirit? Does it mean that absolute knowing is science by providing the conceptual grasp of spirit and of the essence of consciousness? Or does it mean that absolute knowing is science by removing the opposition of consciousness and freeing knowing from bondage to the preconception that knowing always confronts the given, always has foundations or presuppositions?

First of all, so long as spirit's self-knowledge took the form of representation, as it does in the shape of revealed religion, it involved consciousness of an object that is not its actual self-consciousness, but something given to it. If absolute knowing is spirit knowing itself in the shape of spirit rather than in some other shape and if this involves spirit knowing itself as its concept, spirit knows itself by conceiving itself. Absolute knowing then consists in a conceptualizing grasp and science can be thought of as a conceptual knowing, a *begreifend Wissen*.

Secondly, we must consider what such science comprises. In Hegel's introductions to his *Science of Logic*, he maintains that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* provides the concept of science even though he also maintains that logic results in the concept of science as its final product, since logic, as the valid thinking of valid thought, cannot take for granted what science is but must establish it in concluding its own investigation.<sup>15</sup> These two claims

seem contradictory unless the concept of science that the *Phenomenology* introduces is very negative in character, consisting in the elimination of the opposition of consciousness. This minimal result can be said to provide the element of logical science, whose thinking of thinking depends upon the removal of any difference between knowing and its object, unlike the element of representation, which re-presents what is given to knowing. In that minimal way, absolute knowing can be identified with science precisely by eliminating the opposition of consciousness thanks to enabling spirit and consciousness to have themselves in their own concept as their object.

To grasp these connections it is important to consider what constitutes the shape of spirit in which spirit knows itself in absolute knowing. This shape involves a specific kind of subjectivity. The object of knowing here has to have the form of knowing itself if self-knowledge is to be confronting itself and not something other than itself. The object thus has to be a knowing of knowing that has as its object the knowing of knowing. This is something that can only be done in the form of knowing conceiving itself. This is because one represents an object insofar as the latter has something given about it that is independent of knowing's relating to it. By contrast, when one conceives something that is itself a self-conception, it has no content independent of that conceptual knowing's relation to it.

Our very first lecture considered whether there was any shortcut to achieving an equalization of knowing and its object. Foundational epistemology, which turned to investigate knowing before knowing what is, had to take knowing to be something given apart from its object, since only then can knowing be investigated by itself, prior to knowing objects. Since the knowing that is investigated must know an object different from itself, the knowing of the foundational epistemologist is itself necessarily different from the knowing under scrutiny. Whereas the knowing of the transcendental investigator is a knowing of knowing, the knowing it is investigating is not a knowing of knowing but a knowing of an object distinct from itself. This means that the transcendental investigation is automatically using a knowing that it is not examining. To overcome this dogmatic, uncritical character, one must remove the difference between the knowing that does the transcendental investigation, the knowing that investigates knowing, and the knowing that is under investigation. How can that be done? How can the knowing under investigation become indistinguishable from the knowing that does the investigation? The difference can be removed if the knowing under investigation is a knowing of knowing. If what is established to be true knowing is a knowing of knowing, then the knowing of knowing that is investigating true knowing is itself true knowing and can achieve a certainty that is in conformity with its truth. Consequently, only if true knowing turns out to be a knowing of knowing, can there be an investigation that is not dogmatic. If, however, that is the case, then knowing is not different from its object. Both

knowing and its object are equally a knowing of knowing. One thus ends up having to eliminate the difference between knowing and its object, if one is going to take an investigation of knowing seriously and do it in a way that is internally consistent.

The above argument might be regarded as a shortcut to what has gone on in the entire *Phenomenology of Spirit* as it leads up to and into absolute knowing. This “shortcut” ends up with something very similar to what is here presented as absolute knowing. The “shortcut” arrives at what has proven phenomenologically to be the proper resolution, but it does so on the basis of certain assumptions that the phenomenological exposition has not had to affirm. Absolute knowing is going to be a self-knowing of spirit in the shape of spirit, where absolute knowing will remove the form of representation and therewith remove the abiding discrepancy between knowing and its object. Absolute knowing will thus involve a self-knowing of self-knowing, which can only be achieved if the self-knowing in question is a conceptualizing self-knowing of a conceptualizing self-knowing.

To be conceptualizable, the knowing of knowing must be universal in character. The individuality of the knowing self must be universal and not involve extraneous features that fall outside the knowing of knowing. It has to be, as Hegel repeatedly insists, a pure self-knowing. It must be not just an individual self-consciousness but a self-consciousness that knows itself to be a universal self, that is, to be spirit. This is why the conceptualizing self-knowing of absolute knowing must be a self-knowing of spirit in the shape of spirit. Spirit can conceptually know itself and comprise a pure self-knowing only by having as its object self-knowing in the shape of spirit. Only then is it something that is conceptualizable and that conceives itself. The minimal, initial characterization of science is just this: the thinking of thinking or logic. That is the positive description of what we have the moment the opposition of consciousness is left behind.

### PART 3

In paragraphs 798 and 799 Hegel provides positive characterizations of absolute knowing that for the first time go beyond the account of the one-sided reconciliations that recollections of some earlier shapes of consciousness have provided. Now we have before us what is at hand when reconciliation has been carried through on both sides and combined in one shape of knowing. The true content of spirit knowing itself as what is absolute, as exhaustive of objectivity, is combined with objectivity becoming the form of the self that knows itself as universal. Hegel maintains that the concept here becomes the element of determinate being, *Dasein*.<sup>16</sup> That determinacy in general will be the development of the concept is tied to the self-conscious-

ness of spirit apprehending itself. This is because spirit knowing itself in its own shape requires that its knowing be a pure, conceptualizing knowing (*begreifende Wissen*). In other words, the self-knowing of spirit must be a self-conceiving and therefore the self-knowing must be universal so as to be conceivable, rather than depend upon any represented content. That means it also has to have a conceptually intrinsic character of its own that is stripped of all extraneous givens. On all these counts, Hegel can maintain, as he does at the end of paragraph 798, that spirit appearing to consciousness within this element is science.

This science cannot be empirical science, since that depends upon confronting a given that must be represented rather than known purely, *a priori*. Reason's observation of nature already displayed the discrepancies that haunted that attempt to find the category in the given.

Nor can this science be formal, deductive logic. We came across such formal reasoning as the subject matter of psychological observation, where the content of thought had a given character in which reason sought to uncover formal universal relationships. There again the discrepancy between the form and content of knowing signaled the continued bondage of knowing to the opposition of consciousness.

Instead, science here consists in the self-knowing of a knowing that is pure self-knowledge, which involves no opposition between knowing and anything distinct from itself. Does this present us with anything determinate at all to be known? Can it be any more than a thinking of thinking, where knowing and its object are the same and the thinking in question has no given character at all to begin with? Absolute knowing does not comprise some determinate absolute knowledge, some *a priori* doctrine of things in themselves. Rather, absolute knowing consists in a removal of representation and the confrontation with the given, whose only positive result is a pure self-knowing, a universal knowing of a universal knowing of knowing, which comprises the element of logic, where determinacy is the concept. As such, absolute knowing is otherwise indeterminate in the same way in which Hegel identifies logic and philosophy in general at the beginning of philosophical investigation.

The science with which absolute knowing can be identified is none other than logic proper, a thinking of thinking, a conceptualizing of conceptualizing. Absolute knowing, like logic, does not think about something different from its thinking. This is why logic requires overcoming the opposition of consciousness, which absolute knowing accomplishes. Logic and the pure thinking of philosophy in general cannot be undertaken so long as knowing addresses an object distinct from itself, so long as knowing confronts something given, so long as knowing has foundations, so long as knowing has presuppositions. The opposition of consciousness bars the way to philosophy



and logic in particular precisely because it leaves knowing trapped in representation, in a discrepancy between certainty and truth.

Absolute knowing may remove something determinate, namely the opposition of consciousness, but in so doing, it offers a “concept of science” that is utterly indeterminate. The dual reconciliations may constitute the thinking of thinking that gives logic its vocation, but what thinking is is something that has yet to be determined here at what is simultaneously the end of *Phenomenology* and the beginning of the science. If one were to regard this science as already having a positive character, it would be a dogmatic given, external to the thinking in which logic is going to engage. If the science of absolute knowing knew anything determinate at the start, it would revert to representation.

Of course, absolute knowing as the last shape of consciousness has a determinate description, from which the indeterminate starting point of science emerges. Once consciousness experiences how the form of representation in revealed religion prevents its certainty to be validated, it must regard overcoming that form to be where its truth is to be found and it must invoke the dual reconciliations that together allow that form to be removed. This final shape thus consists in a pure self-knowing that understands itself to be universal and spirit, an I that is we and a we that is I. It knows itself as spirit not in the manner of membership in some ethical community, but in a purely conceptual way, where representation has given way to a pure self-consciousness of spirit that has as its object the very same universal self-knowing. Although the pure self-consciousness of spirit in its own shape has a determinate character, its self-knowing has nothing determinate for its outcome. The poles of its relationship are experienced to be indistinguishable. As a consequence, the relationship of oppositional knowing constitutive of consciousness itself collapses. The shape of absolute knowing thereby renders itself the final shape of consciousness, the shape to end all shapes, bringing closure to phenomenological observation.

At this culminating terminus, where knowing with presuppositions has relinquished its final hold on discourse, Hegel feels free to tantalize us with what awaits philosophical science. The attainment of absolute knowing may have no positive knowledge to offer, but it opens the door to doing philosophy without foundations and Hegel points to the broad itinerary that may follow.

He begins by projecting how philosophical science might move from its pure conceptualizing of pure conceptualizing to a conceptualizing of nature. From there, philosophy can advance to consider mind and history. We must distinguish this progress of science from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As Hegel points out, when science develops itself, it does not involve shapes of consciousness and their inversions. The development of science proper consists instead in conceptual determination.

Nonetheless, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a science, even if it is not that of the philosophy of mind or spirit per se. As Hegel noted way back in the introduction,<sup>17</sup> phenomenology may address a given, presupposed subject matter, knowing construed as consciousness, but phenomenology engages in a *pure* observation that follows the necessity of the succession of shapes and their culmination in absolute knowing. Because the presupposed subject matter develops itself through its own self-examination, what we observe is what our subject matter knows itself to be in function of how it distinguishes its object from its knowing. The succession of shapes can have a necessary, non-arbitrary character, even though phenomenology starts with something we merely stipulate. Nonetheless, the science of phenomenology is fundamentally different from the pure science it introduces. The latter can take nothing for granted because the science of phenomenology has shown from within how knowing that takes something for granted ends up eliminating its constitutive opposition of subject and object.

One may reject the prospect of doing philosophy without assumptions, without foundations. That rejection, however, has now been shown to be futile, for knowing that confronts the given cannot sustain its own framework in face of its own legitimization requirements. Our experience as phenomenological observers has provided an exhaustive account of how knowing that has presuppositions, that has foundations, that confronts the given, cannot validate itself or bar the way to philosophy. In reaching absolute knowing, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has proven to be a thoroughgoing refutation of the fear of error, the fear of doing philosophy without first examining knowing on the assumption that knowing and its object are distinct.

If we look back over the path we have followed, we see that once consciousness came to regard its object as being itself, it was always striving to get at what absolute knowing offers. This was explicit in consciousness as reason, which had the certainty that there is a reconciliation between self-consciousness and consciousness that can be found in what it observes. Consciousness here operated on the presumption that there really is no opposition of consciousness, even though consciousness as reason took this truth to be something to be verified in what it confronted. Only in absolute knowing does this presumption prove itself true, albeit with the fully indeterminate result with which philosophy must begin.

If the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has had to be worked through from beginning to end, it is because only in that way can one come to this impoverished outcome without asserting it arbitrarily or being completely baffled by what it could mean. Hegel's and our long labors have made it an inescapable threshold on which we now stand, challenging us to think without foundations.

## NOTES

1. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 89, p. 57.
2. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 77, p. 49.
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 167, p. 105.
4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras. 232–33, pp. 139–41.
5. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 440, pp. 264–65.
6. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 678, p. 412.
7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 788, p. 479.
8. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 808, pp. 492–93.
9. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 9.
10. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 793, p. 482.
11. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 793, p. 482.
12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 798, p. 485.
13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 798, p. 485.
14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 798, p. 486.
15. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 48–49, 68.
16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 798, p. 485.
17. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 88, p. 56.



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# Index

- absolute essence, 249, 269, 270, 296, 321, 325; as spirit, 271, 272, 278–280, 322, 323, 324, 326, 344, 356, 357, 366, 367, 370, 371, 375
- absolute freedom and terror, 265, 274, 285, 286, 287–290, 295–296, 300, 370
- absolute knowing, 9, 11, 357–358, 360, 363, 365–366, 375, 376–377, 379, 380–381, 382; as science, 377–378, 380–381
- absolute spirit, 293, 314, 318, 319–320
- abstract right. *See* property right
- Achilles, 232
- action (*Handlung*), 161–163, 231–232
- Aeschylus, 339
- alienation, 243, 244, 247, 252, 258
- analogy, 137
- anatomy, 143–144
- animal, 144, 329
- Antigone, 229, 230, 231–232, 233
- appearance, 3, 4, 14, 61; law of, 61, 65–66, 69–70, 71–74, 113, 149
- appetite, 84, 85, 86, 90, 91, 93, 94, 96–97, 102, 107
- Aristophanes, 339
- Aristotle, 73, 98, 129, 149, 178, 214, 225, 298, 328, 375
- art: fine, 17, 324; living work of, 337–338
- artifact, 79, 141, 324
- asceticism. *See* self-abnegation
- astrology, 164
- autonomy. *See* self-determination
- beautiful soul, 312–313, 375–376
- beginning: of logic, 32
- being, 25–26, 32; for self, 46, 122, 368
- Berman, Robert Bruce, ix
- Bildung*. *See* cultivation
- body: as organ of activity, 164, 165
- botany, 144
- brain, 167–168
- brotherhood, 229
- Carvaka, 69
- Casanova, 183
- categorical imperative, 213
- category, 68, 129–134, 147, 171–173, 174, 187, 195–196, 197–198, 200, 201, 217, 221, 243, 247, 258, 267, 362, 380
- causality, 47, 68, 73
- cause and effect. *See* causality
- certainty, 6–7, 25; and truth, 6, 7, 31, 360, 364
- children and parents, 228, 229
- Christianity, 110, 111, 324, 346–347, 355
- civil society, 220, 229–230
- class. *See* universality: of class
- membership
- clergy, 117, 120
- cognition. *See* knowing
- cohesion, 145
- comedy, 230, 338, 340, 343, 345–346, 347

- communion, 351, 352, 356, 366  
 communitarianism, 176, 177, 317  
 concept, 6, 137–138, 139, 142, 266, 293,  
     367, 368, 376, 379; empirical, 62  
 conceptualization, 105, 147, 324, 352, 367,  
     368, 369, 376  
 conscience, 298, 306, 307–312, 313, 317,  
     318, 322, 345, 354–355, 363, 370, 372,  
     373–374, 375, 376; conviction of,  
     308–309, 311, 313, 317, 318  
 consciousness, 6, 10, 27, 28, 31, 34, 42, 61,  
     63, 125, 174, 361; experience of, 11;  
     honest, 206, 207, 209, 210; inversion  
     of, 7, 8, 10, 11, 25, 37, 43, 363, 381;  
     opposition of, 2, 6, 8, 13, 16, 19, 21, 22,  
     23, 25, 27, 32, 41, 80, 83, 107, 171,  
     221, 295, 320, 325, 352, 357–358,  
     359–360, 361, 363–364, 365, 366, 367,  
     375, 378, 380–381; pure, 266–268, 270,  
     272, 273, 278, 279, 296, 319; shapes of,  
     7, 8, 10, 11, 23, 27, 31, 381. *See also*  
     language: of disruption  
 constitution, 57, 237; making, 237  
 creation, 352–353  
 Creon, 229, 233  
 crime, 158  
 cult (*der Kultus*), 336–337, 344  
 cultivation, 160–161, 243, 248, 249–252,  
     253, 254, 256, 266, 271, 370; pure, 264  
 custom, 158–159, 160, 176  
  
 death, 142, 355; of God, 327, 329, 346,  
     350, 355–356  
 deed (*Tat*), 161–163, 164, 165, 166,  
     231–232  
 deism, 283–284, 336  
 democracy, 289  
 density, 145  
 Descartes, René, 1  
 description, 33, 38, 75  
 desire, 96–97, 179, 180, 204. *See also* self-  
     consciousness: as desire  
 determinate negation, 7  
 determination, 57  
 devotion, 112–114, 115–116, 335  
*Deuteronomy*, 355  
 Don Giovanni, 180, 188  
 Don Quixote, 189  
 Dove, Kenley Royce, ix  
  
 duty, 296–300, 301–303, 305, 309; and  
     nature, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302,  
     304, 305, 307, 311, 370; to oneself, 310  
  
 economy, 248, 251, 252, 253, 254–258,  
     259–261, 263, 289  
 electricity, 138  
 empiricism: absolute, 132, 133  
 empiricists, 1, 27, 44  
 Enlightenment, 277; as a shape of  
     consciousness, 265, 273–274, 277–285,  
     296, 322, 336, 370, 372, 374; truth of,  
     281–285, 372  
 epic, 338–339  
 epistemology: foundational, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,  
     16, 17, 22, 24, 359, 378  
 epoché, 15  
 ethical community, 173, 174, 175–177,  
     188, 191, 211, 219–220, 226, 229, 237,  
     271, 290, 300, 303, 317, 353, 370, 381;  
     natural, 220, 221–226, 229, 232–238,  
     239, 240, 252, 254, 255, 257, 270, 271,  
     317, 319, 321–322, 331, 332, 334, 372  
 ethics: contemporary, 173, 177, 295;  
     teleological, 215  
 evil, 311–312, 313–314, 318, 354–355  
 evolution, 136, 140, 329  
 experience, 11  
 experiment, 134, 138, 148  
 explanation, 74–75, 77, 81, 113, 132  
  
 faith, 188, 190, 249, 268–269, 270–271,  
     272, 277, 278–281, 283, 296; and pure  
     insight, 265–273, 321, 322, 336. *See*  
     *also* devotion  
 family, 220, 222–224, 225, 226–229, 234,  
     235–236  
 Fanon, Frantz, 96  
 fate, 182, 234–235, 236–237, 238, 239,  
     242, 252, 322, 339–340, 344  
 fear of death, 105, 106  
 feeling, 113, 114, 226  
 Fishkin, James, 235  
 flattery, 262–263  
 force, 47, 48, 64, 67, 161; as determinative  
     of law, 74, 77; and its expression, 61,  
     63, 64–65, 66, 67, 79; in relation to  
     another force, 61, 65, 67–69, 99, 132;  
     soliciting and solicited, 61, 65, 67–69,



- 90, 104  
 forgiveness, mutual, 313–314, 318–319, 354–355  
 freedom: political, 237. *See also* self-determination  
 French Revolution, 290  
  
 Garden of Eden, 354–355  
*Gegenstand* and *Gegenständlichkeit*, 83, 366–367, 368  
 gender, 224, 225, 241  
 generalization, 148–149  
 genus. *See* universality: of genus and species  
 God: anthropomorphic, 333–334, 339, 344, 354; as spirit, 345  
 Golden Rule, 186  
 good and bad for self-alienated spirit, 248, 252–253, 254, 257–260, 263, 264, 265, 313  
 grace, 115  
 gravity, 74, 138  
 guilt and crime, 231–233, 235  
  
 habit, 158  
 happiness (*Glück*), 178, 297–298, 305; pursuit of, 179, 180–181  
 hedonism, 180  
 Hegel, G. W. F.: *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, 11; as introduction to philosophy, 20, 21; *Lectures on Aesthetics*, 232; *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, 364–365; *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 4, 5, 10, 11–12, 17, 109, 134, 360, 364, 381–382; *Philosophy of Nature*, 327; *Philosophy of Right*, 12, 161, 220, 229, 238, 239, 317, 365; *Science of Logic*, 11, 17–19, 68, 83, 89, 377  
 “here and now,” 27, 28, 35–36, 37  
 heroic service to the state, 261  
 heteronomy, 24, 149  
 highest good, 304–305  
 history, 364–365; normative, 364–365  
 historicism, 177  
 Hobbes, Thomas, 110, 186, 244  
 Holy Spirit, 114  
 holy will, 302–303, 306  
 Homer, 339  
  
 household. *See* family  
 human, 330  
 human right, 281  
 Husserl, Edmund, 15–16  
 hymn, 334–335, 336, 337  
  
 idealism, 128, 131, 132, 171, 206; subjective  
*Illiad*, 339, 349  
 immaculate conception, 353–354  
 immanent critique, 13, 24, 41  
 incarnation, 347, 351, 352–354  
 inclination, 300, 302, 305, 306  
 individuality, 131, 148, 294, 324–325  
 induction, : problem of, 137  
 infinite : genuine or true, 64, 66, 76, 77, 78, 79, 88, 147, 271, 351, 368; moral progress, 305; as the nonfinite, 64; spurious, 271  
 inner and outer, 143–144, 145, 150, 161–164, 165, 166  
 inner difference, 76, 77, 78–79, 80, 88, 147, 168, 172, 236, 266, 280–281, 293, 325, 367, 368  
 intelligence, 28, 35, 42  
 intention, 162, 239  
 intentionality, 16  
 interpretation, 33, 38  
 intuition 179; forms of, 35  
 inverted world, 61, 66, 75–76, 77, 78, 81, 88  
 irony, 340, 343  
 Islam, 111  
  
 Jesus Christ, 113, 347, 348, 350, 351  
 Judaism, 111  
 justice, 149  
 justification: foundational, 22–24  
  
 Kant, Immanuel, 1, 15, 16, 41, 62, 72–73, 129–130, 133, 200, 211, 213, 214, 215, 239, 282, 297, 300, 301, 310, 372  
 Kierkegaard, Søren, 11, 180, 188, 310  
 knight of virtue, 188–191, 192, 213, 261, 267  
 knowing, 89; foundational, 6, 32, 42, 43; as instrument, 2, 3, 4; as medium, 2, 3, 4; as a phenomenon, 4–5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 24, 31, 359

- knowledge: by acquaintance, 28; by description, 28
- Kojève, Alexandre, 12
- labor, 97–98, 104–105, 106; and capital, 12, 96
- language, 32, 36–37, 42, 261–263, 334; of disruption, 264–265, 266, 269, 277, 313
- law, 47, 49, 79, 137–138, 141, 147, 148, 149, 157–158, 159, 219, 285; civil, 222, 239; diversification of, 72; divine, 222–224, 225, 226, 228, 229–231, 233, 235, 236, 322; human, 222, 225, 226, 228, 229–231, 233, 235, 236, 322; of attraction, 66, 75; of ethical community, 218, 219, 220, 234; of inversion, 66, 75, 77–78, 80, 186; of the heart, 179, 184–186, 187, 188, 191, 192, 202, 208, 213, 230. *See also* appearance: law of
- legality: world empire of, 237, 238, 239–243, 244, 247, 249, 253, 254, 271, 322, 345
- life, 64, 66, 76–77, 79–81, 84–85, 88, 89, 92, 98–99, 101, 102, 105, 147, 150, 156, 157, 168, 328–329, 368; genus process of, 88–89, 90, 91, 92
- light, 326–327, 328
- Locke, John, 27, 44, 46, 48, 64, 244
- logic, 379; descriptive, 153, 154–157; formal, 19, 133, 380; laws of, 151; systematic, 17, 18–20, 380–381
- lord of the world, 237, 240, 241, 244
- love, 226–227; ethical, 227
- luminous essence (*Lichtwesen*), 326–327, 328
- lyric, 338
- madness, 186, 232
- Maker, William, 21
- marriage, 227, 228, 229, 230
- Marx, Karl, 11, 12, 96
- master-servant relation. *See* master-slave relation
- master-slave relation, 12, 87, 96–100, 103–105, 117, 122, 175, 180, 219, 225, 240, 263
- materials. *See* matters
- matter: pure, 284
- matters, 47–48, 49, 52, 54, 55, 56
- mechanism, 73
- metabolism, 140
- method, 18
- Michelangelo, 354
- Miller, A. V., 197
- mind, 17, 27
- modernity, 232, 365
- moment, 87
- morality, 161–162, 239, 317; as a shape of consciousness, 212, 239, 290, 293, 295, 296–303, 317, 322, 345, 353, 355, 363, 370, 372; dissemblances of, 303, 304–306
- moral subject, 239
- mores. *See* custom
- nature, 17
- negation, 36, 47. *See also* determinate negation
- nepotism, 235
- neurophysiology, 167–168
- Newton, Isaac, 73
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 41, 114
- nihilism, 177
- noble and base individuals of self-alienated spirit, 260–261, 263
- nominalism, 41
- novel, 338
- Objekt* and *Objektivität*, 83, 366
- observation, 132–133, 149, 168, 169, 171–172, 174, 195, 217, 274, 371, 372–373, 374, 375, 380; of life, 139–146, 150, 152; of natural kinds, 136; of nature, 126, 129, 135–146, 147, 150, 151, 323. *See also* observation of self-consciousness
- observation of self-consciousness, 126, 146, 151, 152, 309, 347; in its own actuality, 153, 159–169; in its purity as thinking, 151, 153, 153–157, 380; in its relation to external reality, 151, 153, 157–159. *See also* observation
- Odyssey*, 339
- Oedipus, 162, 166, 231–232
- oikos*, 234, 248, 317. *See also* family
- one, the, 46
- ontology, 1, 3, 5, 21, 359
- oracle, 334–336, 337

- particularity, 131, 148, 324–325  
 perception, 27, 42–44, 45–58, 62, 63,  
     64–65, 66, 84, 88, 106, 132, 143, 274,  
     348, 361, 370, 372  
 person, 238–240, 243, 249, 254, 345  
 phenomena. *See* appearance  
 phenomenological observer, 5, 10, 134  
 phenomenology, 5, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16,  
     27, 43, 85, 359, 382; beginning of, 25,  
     26  
 philosophy, 10, 17, 112, 325; beginning of,  
     20, 26; critical or transcendental, 1, 22;  
     foundation-free or systematic, 381, 382;  
     introduction to, 12, 16, 20, 21; of mind,  
     27, 35, 85, 382; modern, 4, 5; natural  
     assumption of, 4, 5, 22; of science, 133  
 phrenology, 151, 159, 166–169, 172, 283,  
     371  
 physiognomy, 159, 163–166  
 Pinkard, Terry, 197  
 plants, 328–329  
 Plato, 14, 110, 236, 365  
 pleasure and necessity, 179–183, 187, 188  
 polis, 234, 248, 317. *See also* state  
 pre-Socratics, 327  
 principle of non-contradiction, 155, 214  
 probability, 137  
 property, 204, 207, 213–214, 239,  
     240–241, 242, 247  
 property right, 162, 239, 249, 317  
 purpose, 162, 239  
 psyche, 27  
 pure activity, 203, 205–207, 212  
 pure insight, 264, 265–266, 268, 269,  
     272–274, 277  
 race, 225  
 Rawls, John, 177, 235  
 reason, 134, 171, 199, 293; as active, 175;  
     as autonomous, 107; healthy, 208, 210,  
     211, 218; as individuality that takes  
     itself to be real in and for itself, 174,  
     175, 191, 193, 196, 197–215, 217–218;  
     instinct of, 129, 138, 148, 160; as  
     lawgiver, 197, 207–211, 212, 218, 230,  
     234; as self-actualization of self-  
     consciousness, 169, 172–173, 175, 176,  
     177–193, 196, 200, 250; as testing laws,  
     197, 212–215, 218, 230, 234, 237; as a  
     type of shape of consciousness, 11, 31,  
     64, 79, 87, 109, 118, 123, 125,  
     126–127, 171, 212, 215, 241, 258, 267,  
     293, 362, 382; as unification of  
     consciousness and self-consciousness,  
     118, 125, 127, 129, 130, 147, 294, 362  
 recognition, 95, 219, 270, 294; reciprocal,  
     86, 92–93, 94, 99, 174, 176, 219, 319,  
     320, 370  
 recollection, 9, 358, 364–365, 373–375,  
     379  
 reference: indexical, 38; indicative, 33,  
     35–36, 38  
 reflective equilibrium, 177  
 reformist and revolutionary activity, 158  
 religion, 11, 17, 110–111, 112, 113, 114,  
     249, 268, 314; absolute, 343, 346; of  
     the artisan (*der Werkmeister*), 329–331,  
     332; in the form of art (*Kunst-Religion*),  
     321, 322, 323–324, 329, 331–340, 344,  
     348; nature (*die natürliche Religion*),  
     323, 324, 326–331, 332, 344, 348;  
     revealed, 324, 327, 338, 340, 343,  
     344–357, 363–364, 365–367, 368, 370,  
     374, 377, 381; as a type of shape of  
     consciousness, 249, 268–269, 320–321,  
     362, 363–364, 370, 373, 376  
 religious community, 314, 320, 323, 331,  
     332, 334, 335, 336, 338, 349, 350,  
     351–352, 354, 355–357  
 representation, 112, 268, 278, 279, 281,  
     284, 321, 322, 325, 327, 345, 349–350,  
     351, 352, 354, 356; form of versus form  
     of thought, 324–325, 356–357, 358,  
     365, 367, 368, 369, 370–371, 376, 377,  
     381  
 resurrection, 350, 351, 353, 356  
 revelation, 343  
 Roman Empire, 240  
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 244, 288, 289  
  
*Sache*, 197, 203–204, 206, 207, 213, 227,  
     241, 242, 255–256  
 Sartre, Jean-Paul, 96  
 Schmitt, Carl, 289  
 science (*Wissenschaft*), 377, 379, 380–381  
 seduction, 180, 181–182, 183, 188  
 self-abnegation, 116, 117, 122

- self-consciousness, 10, 12, 31, 62, 63, 64, 71, 76, 77, 79, 80–81, 84–87, 88, 89, 92, 101, 102, 125, 127, 134, 147, 168, 175, 325, 361, 367, 368; in  
consciousness of another  
consciousness, 86–87, 91, 91–92, 93, 102–103; as desire, 84–85, 85, 86, 88, 90–91, 92, 94, 102, 103, 106, 107, 127, 128, 175, 183, 283, 285, 351; as life and death struggle, 86, 89–90, 94–95, 97, 103, 116, 175, 219; right of, 281, 282, 283; universal, 93, 176, 271, 294, 332
- self-determination, 199; and normativity, 23–24
- self-knowledge, 216, 360–361, 362, 363, 364, 369, 373, 374; pure, 319, 320, 368, 369, 379, 380, 381
- self-relation. *See* being: for self
- sensation, 25, 113
- sense-certainty, 25, 27, 28, 31, 32–39, 41–42, 43, 44–49, 56, 84, 88, 106, 132, 186, 211, 274, 282, 284, 326, 348, 361, 370, 372
- sensibility, 299, 300, 301, 305
- sensuous manifold, 35, 36, 45, 54, 57, 62
- sex, 180
- Sextus Empiricus, 14–15, 107
- siblings, relation of, 229
- sign, 164, 165–166
- skepticism, 1, 6, 8, 14; ancient, 14–15, 16, 69, 107–108; as a shape of  
consciousness, 101, 106–109, 110, 112, 127, 240, 243, 244, 247, 265, 369
- slavery, 239
- social contract theory, 177, 222, 244, 288
- social science, 159
- Socrates, 13–14, 15, 16
- solipsism, 128, 134, 310
- something, 20
- Sophocles, 339
- space, 28, 32, 35, 328, 331
- species. *See* universality: of genus and species
- specific gravity. *See* density
- speech, 163, 309, 310–311, 313
- spirit, 11, 64, 87, 93, 94, 109, 219, 248, 270, 271, 287, 294, 300, 307, 310, 332, 355, 360, 361, 377, 379; self-alienated, 247–273, 313; as a type of shape of  
consciousness, 173, 174, 175, 191, 197, 215–216, 242, 254, 267, 295, 309, 318, 362–363, 369–370. *See also* absolute spirit
- spiritual essence, 175, 207, 215, 216, 218–219, 220, 244, 247, 248, 249, 258, 270, 271, 274, 280
- spiritual zoo, 196, 199–203, 211, 217, 241, 252, 309
- state, 110, 210, 220, 222–223, 225, 226, 229–230, 234, 236, 248, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255–257, 259–260, 261–263; of nature, 186, 214
- Stoicism: as a shape of consciousness, 100, 101, 103–104, 105–106, 107, 112, 127, 240, 243, 247, 267, 345, 369
- strict liability, 162, 239
- struggle of life and death. *See* self-consciousness: as life and death struggle
- substance: and accident, 237; as subject, 343, 345, 350, 376
- syllogism, 70
- symbol, 164
- teleology, 140–141; external, 141, 142; internal, 141
- temple, classical, 333, 337
- Thales, 327
- theory and theorizing, 128, 133, 134, 139, 172
- thing with properties, 27, 44, 45–48, 50, 55, 61, 64, 132; essential and unessential, 53, 54–55, 56–58; as medium, 47, 48, 50, 55
- thinking, 112, 127. *See also* reason
- “this,” 33, 34–35, 36, 37, 211
- time, 28, 32, 35
- tragedy, 230–231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 338, 339
- transcendental deduction, 130
- transcendental turn, 1
- Trinity, the, 111, 324, 350, 351
- tropism, 328
- truth, 6; standard of, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 25, 44
- understanding, 27, 42, 49, 53, 58, 61–81, 84, 87, 88, 89, 99, 101, 106, 110, 113,

- 130, 131, 132, 137, 143, 149, 150, 217, 281, 285, 317, 361, 368, 370, 372
- unhappy consciousness, 101, 108–109, 110–118, 119–122, 126, 188, 243, 248, 257–270, 318, 321, 335, 336, 345
- universality, 34, 36, 37, 44, 131, 135, 148, 150, 153; abstract or formal, 36, 39, 149, 150, 212, 213, 214, 294; of class membership, 34; conditioned, 42, 46, 47, 51, 53, 55, 62, 70; of genus and species, 34, 142, 145, 150, 152, 213; sensuous, 42, 45, 46, 47, 51, 53, 55, 62, 70; unconditioned, 42, 53, 62, 63, 64, 67, 70, 73, 76
- utility, 274, 282–283, 284–285, 286–287, 322, 330, 370, 372, 373, 375
- virtue, 298; ancient, 191; and the way of the world, 179, 187–192, 200, 202, 261, 267
- war, 238
- way of the world, 186–187, 188
- wealth. *See* economy
- Wikipedia*, 277
- Williams, Hank, 272
- Zoroastrianism, 326



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